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THE
GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

STUDIO ADDICTUS
HOLY CROSS PROVINCE

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We must preach more upon the great texts of the Scriptures, the tremendous passages whose vastnesses almost terrify us as we approach them.

J. H. JOWETT.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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"THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"

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ISAIAH

STUDIO ADDICTUS
HOLY CROSS PROVINCE

Edinburgh: T. & T. CLARK, 38 George Street
1910

Printed by
MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED,
FOR
T. & T. CLARK, EDINBURGH.
LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT, AND CO. LIMITED.
NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS.

FIRST IMPRESSION . . . . *November 1910*
SECOND IMPRESSION . . . *November 1910*

MADE AND PRINTED IN
GREAT BRITAIN.

PREFACE

THE purpose of these volumes is to direct attention to the value for the pulpit of the great texts of the Bible, and to offer a full exposition of these texts, illustrated throughout.

There is, first, a short introduction to each text, bringing it into relation with its context, and giving the circumstances which led to its utterance. Its contents are, next, arranged in order, so that the leading thought or thoughts may be made prominent, and each subordinate topic may receive its proper place and value. Then comes an exposition of the contents of the text, expressed in good modern English, and illustrated throughout.

Thus the preacher is not supplied with a ready-made sermon, but with materials for a sermon. And in some cases the exposition and illustration of the text will furnish materials for more sermons than one. This is what we need. "The first qualification for writing a sermon," says Bishop Boyd Carpenter, "is that you should have something to say. For this purpose," he adds, "a man must have material at command. It is better to realise this necessity, even though it should lead you to discover how small your stock of material is, than that you should indulge in indolent self-complacency, and should attempt to spin something out of nothing."

The illustrations are new. That is to say, none of them have been taken from any existing store or collection of illustrations. Some of them have never before been in print. They have been sent to the Editor by friends and correspondents

all over the world out of their own experience. If they should be considered too numerous, let it be remembered that the preacher is certainly not expected to use them all, but to make his choice among them. Their number will encourage or even compel him to make every sermon his own.

Nothing in the world is easier than to gather illustrations of a kind and dot the sermon with them. Nothing is more difficult than to find the illustration that really illustrates and to bring it in pointedly at the very place where it is required. The attempt has been made to render that service in these volumes.

It is proposed to cover the whole Bible in five years, issuing four volumes annually. The volumes for 1910–1911 will be Isaiah, St. Mark, Genesis to Numbers, and probably Romans.

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The Unnatural Children.

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The Unnatural Children.

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.—i. 3.

The first chapter of Isaiah has been called by Ewald *the great arraignment.* It contains four leading ideas. They are the ideas, says Skinner, which run through the whole of Isaiah's teaching, and through the teaching of all the pre-Exilic prophets. These ideas are—(1) the breach between Jehovah and Israel; (2) the inefficiency of mere ritual; (3) the call to national repentance; (4) the certainty of a sweeping judgment.

Ewald's title suggests a court of justice; and it has often been pointed out that God is both Judge and Plaintiff, Israel the defendant, heaven and earth the jury, while the prophet is both principal witness and prosecuting attorney. But all this is apt to withdraw the attention from the real pathos of the scene. No doubt there is a judge, and judgment is pronounced. But the Judge is a Father. The paraphernalia of the court-room pass into insignificance when there is heard the exceeding bitter cry, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

The third verse is an illustration. It shows the ignorance of the children in contrast to the knowledge of the domestic animals.

I.

The Knowledge of the Domestic Animals.

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib."

1. It is knowledge of their *owner.* They both know and acknowledge him. He on his part not only owns but takes care

of them. He rears them, tames them, houses them, and heals them. In return they serve him.

¶ True to the life, no sooner had the drove got within the walls than it began to disperse. Every ox knew perfectly well his owner, and the way to his house; nor did it get bewildered for a moment in the mazes of the narrow and crooked alleys. As for the ass, he walked straight to the door, and up to "his master's crib," without turning to bid good-night to his companions of the field. I followed some into their habitation, and saw each take his appropriate manger, and begin his evening meal of dry tibn.[1]

2. Their service brings them into fellowship—such fellowship as is possible between man and the lower animals. There is some sense of mutual dependence. There is affection and sometimes self-sacrifice. The prophet speaks of the domestic animals of his own people. *We* should see his point more clearly if we thought of the horse and the dog.

¶ It is not an uncommon thing in the Argentine pampas—I have on two occasions witnessed it myself—for a riding horse to come home to die. I am speaking of horses that live out in the open, and have to be hunted to the corral or enclosure, or roughly captured with a lasso as they run, when they are required. On going out one summer evening—I was only a boy at the time—I saw one of the horses of the establishment standing unsaddled and unbridled leaning his head over the gate. Going to the spot I stroked his nose, and turning to an old native who happened to be standing near, asked him what could be the meaning of such a thing. "I think he is going to die," he answered; "horses often come to the house to die." And next morning the poor beast was found lying dead not twenty yards from the gate.

I now believe that the sensations of sickness and approaching death in the riding horse of the pampas resemble or simulate the pains, so often experienced, of hunger, thirst, and fatigue, combined together with the oppressive sensations caused by the ponderous native saddle, with its huge surcingle of raw hide, drawn up so tightly as to hinder free respiration. The suffering animal remembers how at the last relief invariably came when the twelve or fifteen hours' torture was over, and when the great iron bridle and ponderous gear were removed, and he had freedom and food and drink and rest. At the gate or at the door of his master's house the sudden relief had always come to him, and there does he go in his sickness to find it again.[2]

[1] Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, ii. 387.

[2] W. H. Hudson, *The Naturalist in La Plata*.

II.

The Ignorance of the Children.

"Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

God has been as a Father to Israel. Now, a father has the right to obedience, service, and especially affection. But Israel had come short. Of the two great commandments of the Law they failed especially in the second. So was it with Israel always. The first commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and there was at least much outward appearance of devotion to God. But the second commandment is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The failure was here. "Of what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me . . . Relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." The scribe who came to Jesus had no doubt of his duty to God. But, willing to justify himself, he asked, "Who is my neighbour?"

I. Their ignorance consisted in not knowing what God had done for them—"Israel doth not know." What had He done?

1. He calls heaven and earth to witness. For He had created them and preserved them, and been their bountiful benefactor. They were not ignorant of the wonders of their world. The psalmists were accustomed to consider the heavens (Ps. viii. 3). And they found that the heavens declared the glory of God (Ps. xix. 1).

2. But God had chosen Israel to be His peculiar people. He had been as a Father to them and had done great things for them, as Samuel reminded them that day upon which He consented to give them a king. It was even a commonplace among the heathen. "Then said they among the nations, the Lord hath done great things for them." And they admitted it when they considered—"The Lord hath done great things for us" (Ps. cxxvi. 2, 3).

3. Above all, God had shown them the care involved in training them to become a blessing to all the nations of the earth. "Thou shalt consider in thine heart," said Moses, "that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth

thee" (Deut. viii. 5). It was this, above all, that they were ignorant of. They mistook the chastening of a father for the wounds of an enemy.

2. Their ignorance was due also to want of consideration—"My people doth not consider." (1) He would have them stop and think. When the rich young ruler came running to Jesus —"Master, what shall I do?"—He stopped him. "Why callest thou me good?" Stop and think. When the Pharisees spoke glibly about the Messiah being David's son, He recalled the 110th Psalm, where David calls the Messiah his Lord. "How can he be both son and Lord?" He said. Stop and think. (2) It is want of consideration that makes men miss Christ. For the most part they simply pass Him by, they do not consider Him. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" (Lam. i. 12). (3) It is want of consideration that makes men lose life itself. They do not know what life is. They do not know that they have lost it. (4) But consideration of God brings considerateness for man. The two great commandments must always be kept in their right order: first, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," next, "Thy neighbour as thyself." It was because Israel rebelled against God that they neglected the poor and the fatherless. It is to those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious that St. Paul writes: "Let your considerateness be known unto all men" (Phil. iv. 5).

¶ It was Israel's lack of perception that was at the root of her sins. Ibsen, in the study of the tragedy of a lost soul in *Peer Gynt*, teaches that God meant something when He made each one of us, and that it is our duty to find out what He did mean. The devil's staunchest ally is lack of perception.

When at the end of his career Peer Gynt, who is the type of a compromising self-seeker, meets the button-moulder, who tells him it is his fate to be cast into the melting-pot, this dialogue ensues. (*Peer Gynt*, Act v. 9.)

Peer. One question only: What is it, at bottom, this "being oneself"?

Button-Moulder. A singular question, most odd in the mouth of a man who just now——

Peer. Come, a straightforward answer.

Button-Moulder. To be oneself is: to slay oneself. But on you that answer is doubtless lost, and therefore we'll say: to

stand forth everywhere with Master's intention displayed like a signboard.

Peer. But suppose a man never has come to know what Master meant with him?

Button-Moulder. He must divine it.

Peer. But how often are divinings beside the mark—then one is carried *ad undas* in middle career.

Button-Moulder. That is certain, Peer Gynt; in default of divining, the cloven-hoofed gentleman finds his best hook.

Learning to do Well.

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xxix. 83 (Burney).

Learning to do Well.

Learn to do well.—i. 17.

How is man to be distinguished from the lower animals? Man has been called a *laughing* animal. But do not the apes also laugh, says Carlyle, or attempt to do it? Nor is Carlyle content with the Frenchman's definition that man is the *cooking* animal. His own definition is that man is the *tool-using* animal.[1] But how will it do to describe him as the being who *learns*? This is Watkinson's definition.[2] Other creatures, he says, can scarcely be said to learn; whatever pertains to their species they do immediately, instinctively, perfectly. "A lark builds its first nest as skilfully as its last, a spider's first embroidery is as exquisite as anything it spins in adult life, whilst a bee constructs its first cell and compounds its first honey, with an efficiency that leaves nothing to be desired." It is altogether different with human beings; they have everything to learn.

I.

What have we to learn?

1. We have to learn how to make the best use of the *body*. Hitherto the development of the body has been done mostly out of school; it has been left to the playground. But now some attention is being given to physical training. And we are even beginning to give our boys an opportunity of learning a trade at school. However it is done, we must learn to use the body.

2. We must also educate the *mind*. We have to learn in order to know, to remember, to appreciate literature and art, to make decisions in the conduct of life.

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, ch. v. [2] *The Bane and the Antidote*, p. 169.

3. Do we stop there? Is the highest aim of education achieved when we possess "a sound mind in a sound body"? What about the *Soul*? Besides learning a trade, besides learning to read and to understand what we read, have we not also to learn *to do well*?

The training of the soul is scarcely recognised as any proper part of public education. Nor is the place of the public teacher always efficiently supplied in the home. We seem to expect that our children should do well naturally.

¶ We are sometimes greatly pained when we detect in our young children pride, cruelty, falsehood, dishonesty, selfishness, avarice, and other vices; but it is a mistake to lay this fact too much to heart and to begin prophesying evil concerning them. Beginning with the piano, children make such sad work of it; when they first try a pen, the characters are exceedingly ambiguous and the page liberally blotted; and when for the first time they essay some task in art, the work of their pencil is utterly grotesque. But we do not therefore despair of them, and write bitter things against them; they were sent to school to learn, and we reasonably hope that by and by their senses will be exercised and developed, that they will shed their barbarisms, and take a worthy place with scholars and artists. They must learn goodness as they learn music, mathematics, languages, and art.

But is not the education of the soul the same thing as the education of the mind? That is just another way of saying, is not cleverness goodness? And we know that cleverness is not always goodness. On the contrary, great intellectual gifts are often found associated with great moral vices. The intellectual and moral organs are so closely related that it is impossible to separate them in thought; yet the light of the one is often eclipsed by the darkness of the other.

¶ Astronomers have recently made very interesting discoveries respecting what are known as binary or companion stars. They tell us that the two stars are in close proximity; indeed, they are so close together that no telescope could separate their images; and yet one of them is dark and the other brilliant. The two orbs are intimately related, and revolve round each other at slight distances; yet whilst one is bright the other is dark, and the dark star is perpetually eclipsing its luminous companion.[1]

¶ It is easy to understand the failure of "goody goody"

[1] *The Bane and the Antidote*, p. 168.

literature. It is "goody goody" rather than good, because it means well, but is not true either in the lower real or higher ideal sense. Its minor heroes pale and are ineffective, while George Eliot's Adam Bede, and Mary Garth, and Dinah live with us like friends, and move us by their virtues,—while the heroic self-devotedness of Jean Valjean, and the infinite goodness of the good Bishop in *Les Misérables,* shine in our minds and hearts as beacon lights of virtue, made visible in the atmosphere of genius. Thus, in order that the examples of literature may work within the mind, the literature must be good in the literary as well as in the ethical sense.[1]

II.

How then are we to learn to do well?

1. We need *Power.* We need the gift, the genius. The man who has no music in him will never learn to be a musician. Those who visit the chapel in Milan which contains Leonardo da Vinci's fresco of the Last Supper see a copy of it first on the wall opposite the entrance door. But when they have seen the original on the wall at the end of the building, they have no hesitation in preferring it. The copy shows traces of careful workmanship, but the original has the stamp of genius.

¶ Sir Joshua Reynolds was taken by a friend to see a picture. He was anxious to admire it, and he looked it over with a keen and careful but favourable eye. "Capital composition; correct drawing; the colour, tone, chiaroscuro excellent; but—but—it wants, hang it, it wants—*That!*" snapping his fingers; and, wanting "that," though it had everything else, it was worth nothing.[2]

¶ I once knew a man who had apparently no ear for music. Possessing every opportunity for travel and culture, he resented the fact that others enjoyed what was a closed world to him. So he set to work to study music from the foundation. He became so expert that he could take to pieces a Wagner opera and recompose its motifs. He enjoyed hearing such an opera rendered, but his pleasure involved scarcely any appreciation of music. It was the pleasure accompanying the intellectual process of analysis and synthesis, the kind of joy one has in working a difficult problem in calculus; but the man remained almost as deaf to music as before he undertook the course of training.[3]

[1] S. Byrant, *Short Studies in Character,* p. 71.
[2] John Brown, *Rab and his Friends,* p. 392.
[3] E. H. Griggs, *Moral Education,* p. 22.

The man of genius, we say, has "the gift." The power to do well is also a gift.

> This, nor gems, nor stores of gold,
> Nor purple state, nor culture can bestow;
> But God alone, when first His active hand
> Imprints the secret bias of the soul.

Or, to put it in another way, as the poet is born, not made, so we must be born again before we learn to do well. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." St. Paul says, "I learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." He does not say, "I have learned," as though it had been the result of daily discipline; he goes back to the moment of the vision of Christ. "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me," and I learned that day to be content. It flashed upon him, says R. M. Pope,[1] in the great moment of his history. When he knew the power of Christ's resurrection, the true explanation of life dawned upon him; the world suddenly wore a new expression.

> World—how it walled about
> Life with disgrace,
> Till God's own smile came out;
> That was thy face!

It is sometimes said that certain men have a natural genius for religion. What they have is natural ability which, when taken possession of by the Spirit of God, makes them eminently successful as witnesses or saints. How would St. Paul have used his reasoning power, or Bunyan his imagination, apart from the grace of God?

¶ The world is full of people who are ambitious to become poets, painters, musicians, or orators, but, despite wearisome and pathetic application, they never do anything really first-rate; the masterpiece is not forthcoming; they find supreme music, art, or eloquence so difficult as to be, in fact, practically impossible. What do these baffled aspirants really need to make their work easy, and to secure them the rapture of triumph? Give that despairing musician an atom of Mozart's melodious brain, that halting poet a spark of Shakespeare's fire, that struggling painter a nerve of Turner's colour-sense, that stammering orator a lick

[1] *The Poetry of the Upward Way*, p. 24.

of Demosthenes' tongue, and bitter failure will be at an end; there will be no more exhausting difficulty and delay, only the intoxicating sense of mastery, progress, and delight. More power in the learner is what is needed, and every difficulty is vanquished, every aspiration fulfilled. So we experience repeated difficulty and disappointment in the pursuit of holiness, because the power of Christ does not sufficiently rest upon us. "Christ *in* you the hope of glory"—not the glory of the future only, but the glory of character here and now. Let us plead for more inward vision, receptivity, and responsiveness, for more of the Spirit that worketh mightily in full surrendered souls, and all things fair and perfect shall become possible.[1]

2. We need a *Pattern*. As the child who is to learn to write receives a copybook with a headline, so we need an example if we are to learn to do well. Should the example be good or bad? Some ethical teachers think it best to show us the repulsiveness and horror of vice. Many novelists follow this method. "The drama," says Mr. Watkinson, "is fond of holding up the mirror to nature, as the phrase goes, and very ugly reflections they commonly are; one might think that the stage existed in the interests of the doctrine of original sin. Newspapers foster purity by raking in the kennels, and journals with religious and moral pretensions go to an extreme in exhuming and exhibiting repulsive incidents in individual and social life."[2] But how often are drunkards reformed by the sight of a drunkard? It is well known that murders are apt to follow when the details of some ghastly murder are given in the newspapers. We might as well hope to obtain a good style by familiarising ourselves with specimens of bad English. Let the pattern be good, and as good as possible. As William Tell has made many patriots, as Florence Nightingale has trained many nurses, as Lord Shaftesbury has shown the way to many philanthropists, so the Lord Jesus Christ is the Pattern for all who would learn to do well. "Learn of me" is His own invitation, and the Apostles are aware that the only way by which they themselves learned to do well was by "looking unto Jesus."

¶ I remember speaking severely to a five-year-old child who was misbehaving at table. She answered quite discourteously.

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Bane and the Antidote*, p. 181. [2] *Ibid.* p. 175.

On being asked why she had spoken so, she said, "Oh, I only wanted to show you the tone of voice you used!"[1]

3. We need *Practice.* How does a young man learn to cycle? By practising it. How does a young medical man attain to usefulness in his profession? By the practice of it. He calls himself a practitioner, and his business a practice.

¶ "Do! Do! Do! Let your picture go, and do another!" said William Hunt to his students when they asked him a thousand curious questions about lines, colours, and effects. In doing, they were to know and excel. And the teachers of science specially demand that all theoretical knowledge shall go hand in hand with experiment. The student must keep on applying his knowledge; only by repeated appeals to the facts of nature does he learn the truth and become a real philosopher. We know only through doing, and through doing ever do better. The famous physician John Hunter used to say to his pupils, "Don't think, try."

1. Take the virtue of *contentment.* In our best moments we feel that fretfulness and ingratitude partake of the nature of blasphemy; yet the repinings and soreness of the soul are subdued only through repeated failure and discipline.

¶ It is true, no doubt, that there is a secret, and that the secret of contentment, as of every other virtue, may be learned in a moment. But for the fulness of the following of Christ in contentment there is need of the patient discipline of years. Contentment, says Dr. J. B. Campbell, is less a gift or a grace than a growth. It is the flower and fruit of careful cultivation. And he mentions three things that aid in its cultivation. (1) *A just consideration of the worth of things.* We shall never find contentment while we value the things that are seen above those that are not seen, the trivial and temporal above the essential and eternal, the material and physical above the moral and spiritual. (2) *Confidence in God.* He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. He is never unmindful of our work and labour of love. Then disappointments become His appointments, and all things work together for good. (3) *Co-operation with God.* For this makes failure impossible, this gives assurance that no word or work is vain. But co-operation with God demands the consecration of self to His service. And so the simple secret of contentment is surrender to God's will. Does anyone doubt it? Let him try it. Does anyone desire it? Let him do it.

[1] E. H. Griggs, *Moral Education*, p. 190.

2. Take the virtue of *sincerity*. Some men are naturally theatrical; they constantly catch themselves making postures; their life is vitiated and disfigured by endless pretence, affectation, and unreality. Through repeated and bitter castigations of the soul, men master this passion for masquerading and attain sincerity, simplicity, and thoroughness of life.

¶ There comes to me a thought of Carlyle's, which contains a world of wisdom: "The true merit of originality is not novelty; it is sincerity." That, as a motto for all who think and speak, may be added to a theory of life, and become the hidden text of many a moral lesson indirectly conveyed through intellectual criticism to others. How cheerful it is to think upon! We can all be sincere; we can all be original.[1]

3. Take the virtue of *veracity*. How much it costs us to learn to speak the truth, to act the truth, to live the truth. We suppress, distort, exaggerate, colour and discolour.

¶ Instead of saying plain "yes," or plain "no," "it is so," "it is not the case," or some other simple, straightforward phrase of assent or denial, a man swears or protests in some foolish way, thereby weakening, not affirming, what he says. All these unnecessary enlargements show that he who uses them is aware that his simple word is not valuable. He distrusts his own honour. Jesus Christ's teaching in respect to this there can be no mistaking. Eliciting the spirit of the third commandment, He declares, "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of the evil one." He would abolish even the solemn oath of the Old Testament, "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand." No man who respects himself, certainly no obedient copier of Jesus Christ, will consent to confirm his "yes" or "no," unless when the law, which knows him not, demands it.[2]

4. Take the virtue of *courtesy*. "Good breeding," says Carlyle, "consists in gracefully remembering the rights of others, high breeding in gracefully insisting on one's own." Thus there are three ways of it. There is the discourteous person whose only practice has been in selfishly saying and doing things that hurt others. There is the selfishly courteous person with the polish of a pagan. And there is the person who, having the

[1] S. Bryant, *Studies in Character*, p. 75.
[2] W. G. Rutherford, *The Key of Knowledge*, p 166.

mind of Christ, learns to put the interests of others before his own. It is the "gift" that makes the difference.

¶ Courtesy is itself a form of service. By gentleness of manner, by an unobtrusive sympathy, by thoughtfulness for others in little things, we may smooth the roughness of life for those with whom we live, soothe their vexations, and contribute more to their real happiness than by great and signal acts of generosity. On the other hand, a harsh, careless word may inflict a worse wound than a blow, and the discomfort created by habitual indifference to the convenience, tastes, opinions, and prejudices of those about us may be harder to bear than positive physical pain. Discourtesy occasions not merely suffering, but sin; and Christian courtesy is a "means of grace" to all who have the happiness to receive it.[1]

They might not need me,
  Yet they might;
I'll let my heart be
  Just in sight—

A smile so small
  As mine might be
Precisely their
  Necessity.

[1] R. W. Dale, *Laws of Christ for Common Life*, p. 121.

Reasoning with God.

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Sermons for Christian Seasons, 1.

Reasoning with God.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.—i. 18.

Isaiah was one of a group or succession of men who might fairly be described as perhaps the greatest teachers of political righteousness whom the world has ever seen—teachers who drank out of the heart of the people, and represented in their turn every section of them. Isaiah himself, if we are to believe tradition, was a man of high social rank, a member of the governing class. His colleagues, or brother prophets, might be like Micah, a man of the people; or like Amos, a herdsman, a gatherer of sycamore fruits. Thus they represented every class, and they stood before their contemporaries, before kings, or nobles, or common people, before all alike, speaking the words of Divine inspiration and conviction. Their mission was simply to hold aloft, without fear of consequences and without thought of personal interest, the ideal national life of a God-fearing people. So they tried the life of those they addressed, their religious profession and their standards of conduct, as with the sword of the Spirit.

The mission of the prophet was to sweep out of the life of his people those contradictions between religious profession and habitual practice which in every age are the besetting danger of all those who live in conventional worship, and with what we might call a tame conscience. The Hebrew prophet is, above all things, the preacher of reality in personal religion, of consistency in personal conduct, and of righteousness pervading every department of national life. It was because of their lack of this reality and consistency that another of these prophets flung out the graphic condemnation of his countrymen:

"Ephraim," he said, "is a cake not turned." Their devotion to Jehovah was only a half devotion; they delighted in their worship, they gave Him of the external, of the emotions of their life, but they did not turn the cake.

Isaiah begins his prophecy by calling upon the heavens and the earth to witness the exceeding sinfulness of God's chosen people. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Such ingratitude and sin as this, he naturally supposes, would shock the very heavens and earth. Then follows a vehement and terrible rebuke. The elect people of God are called "Sodom" and "Gomorrah." "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah." "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more."

This outflow of holy displeasure would prepare us to expect an everlasting rejection of the rebellious and unfaithful people, but it is strangely followed by the most yearning and melting entreaty ever addressed by the Most High to the creatures of His hand: "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

The text may be considered in three parts—

1. An Invitation from God to reason with Him.
2. The Reasoning and its Result.
3. The Surprising Sequel.

I.

AN INVITATION FROM GOD TO REASON WITH HIM.

i. An Invitation from God.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." The proposition comes from God. It does not arise from the human side at all. It is a piece of pure condescension on the part of the Almighty Himself. Grace comes out of the sovereignty of God. The possibility of salvation comes from

God's grace. It is not in anywise of our conception or of our own doing. We are saved by faith, and that not of ourselves, for faith is the gift of God. God, having made this proposition, proceeds upon the assumption that He knows Himself to be right in this case. It is precisely so in our own affairs, in the common controversies of the day. The man who knows himself to be in the right, who feels himself to have a just cause in hand, is always the first to make the noblest propositions, and to offer as many concessions as are possible without impairing the law of absolute right, truth, and propriety.

I said, "I will find God," and forth I went
To seek Him in the clearness of the sky,
But over me stood unendurably
Only a pitiless, sapphire firmament
Ringing the world,—blank splendour: yet intent
Still to find God, "I will go seek," said I,
"His way upon the waters," and drew nigh
An ocean marge, weed-strewn, and foam-besprent;
And the waves dashed on idle sand and stone
And very vacant was the long, blue sea:
But in the evening as I sat alone,
My window open to the vanishing day,
Dear God! I could not choose but kneel and pray,
And it sufficed that I was found of Thee.[1]

Come.

The Rev. James Vaughan, of Brighton, one of the masters in the art of addressing children, makes use of this verse and other four verses which contain the word *come,* as the basis of an address to children on the afternoon of Advent Sunday. Advent, he calls "Come Sunday," and rejoices that there is no "Go-away Sunday" in the Christian Year. Then he says: I want to tell you of five beautiful *Comings,* and when I have told you of all the five, I shall ask you which you like best.

1. I shall call the first *the Grand "Come."* You will find it in the 40th Psalm, and the 7th verse: "Then said I, *Lo, I 'come'!*" Jesus said it when He was up in heaven. "Then." When, I do not know. Thousands and thousands and thousands of years ago. "Then said I, Lo, I come!" Jesus was up in

[1] Edward Dowden.

heaven, and He saw that we were going to be in this world, and He saw that we should be unhappy, because we were lost; and He saw that there would be a great many sacrifices, but they would not do any good, and the poor people would not be able to save themselves and help themselves; so He said to God the Father —He said it then, "*Then* said I, Lo, I come. I will go and save them. I will go." How the angels must have wondered! I should think there was a perfect silence. I should think all heaven was silent when the Son of God said, "I will go to that world." "Lo, I come!" I am so glad He came. He might have had us all up in heaven without coming here first. Then we should not have had Him as a little baby in a cradle. Then we should not have had Jesus as the Boy of twelve years old, or the young Man, as the pattern for us. It was so kind to say, "Lo, I come!"—better than if He did it all up in heaven.

2. The next "Come" I will call *the Gracious "Come."* It is in the 1st chapter of Isaiah, and the 18th verse: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Perhaps there is a boy or girl in the church this afternoon who has been naughty —who knows that he or she has done something very wrong. I don't know what it is. You know. God knows. Now God sends me to you, my dear child, this day, and the message God gives to you is this: "Come now, and let us talk about it. Come now, and let us reason about it. You have been very naughty, and you cannot be happy. Come to Me!" God says, "Listen to Me. I am willing to forgive you. And though your sins be as red as scarlet, though they make you blush, though you know all the waters in the world cannot wash them out, I will do it. Come to Me—really come to Me. Let us reason together about it. I will pardon all. I will forgive all, and you shall have peace!" This is God's message to the lost child. Do you think that when you come God will not receive you?

¶ Once upon a time, at Athens, the Senate was sitting. At their meeting out in the open fields, as the men of Athens were all assembled together deliberating, making laws, a little bird which was just by an oak-tree came flying into the middle of

the assembly. And the poor little sparrow came and nestled itself in the breast of one of the Senators. The poor little thing was terribly frightened, and its feathers were all ruffled. As it came and nestled itself in the breast of one of the old Senators, this cruel man took the little bird out of his breast and flung it to the ground, stamped upon it, and killed it. The other Senators said, "It is shocking! He shall never be a Senator again." They said more. They said, "He should die for his cruelty. The man who can kill a little bird in that way is not fit to live. He shall die." And he was actually put to death for his cruelty to the little sparrow! Do you think that those Senators could be so kind to this little sparrow, and that the great God, who loves you, will not receive you when you go to His fatherly, loving breast?

3. Now I must give you a third "Come," and that is *a Tender "Come."* It is in Matthew xi. 28: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now I may be speaking to some boy who is very tired, tired in a great many ways. I do not suppose he is yet very tired of this life, though life is very hard work, and some little boys even have said, "I am tired of my life." It is not so with you, perhaps. But possibly you are tired of your work or your lessons; perhaps somebody is teasing you very much; perhaps you have some burden on your mind, something you are always thinking of, so you are always "weary and heavy laden." Now Jesus says to you, by me, this afternoon, "Come to Me, with that poor, tired, burdened feeling—*come to Me, and I will give you rest.*" It is so tender. Have you had a tender mother? *He* is more tender. "A mother may forget." *He will never forget.*

¶ I will tell you what happened once. There was a poor woman who was very unhappy and low-spirited, and a clergyman went to see her; and this is what the clergyman said and did. He said to the poor woman, "You are very unhappy." She said, "Yes, I am." "What is it?" he asked. "Tell me." She answered, "Oh, my prayers are poor prayers! I have got such a naughty heart, and I am so cold in my heart, and I do so many wrong things, and grieve God so much." The clergyman said, "Very well, now you have told me about yourself, have you nothing else to tell me?" "No, sir; nothing else," she replied, "only that I am so wicked." "Now," said the clergyman, "say what I say. Say, 'Jesus!'" She said, "Jesus." "Oh no!" said the clergyman, "not so; say it feelingly." Then she said

it a little better—"*Jesus!*" "No, that won't do; you must say it still better, with all your heart. You must say, 'JESUS!'" She began to cry, and in her tears she said, "JESUS!" And from that moment she began to be happy.

4. Now I come to my fourth "Come," and I will call it *the Echoing "Come"!* You will find it at the end of the 22nd chapter of Revelation, the 20th verse—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus." That is *the Echoing "Come!"* because it is the man saying it back to God. God said, "Come now!" and man says back to God, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

¶ I was once present with a clergyman who had a very little boy. His name was Georgie. He was playing on the rug. He had a very good father. He said to him, "Papa, I wish Jesus would come; oh, it would be very nice! His father said to him, "What if Jesus were to come and find you in one of your pets—what would you do then?" This puzzled little Georgie for a while. He was a very clever boy, and he made a very clever answer, but not a very good one. He said, "Well, papa, I should not mind." His papa said, "Why would you not mind?" He said, "Because then I should be Christ's enemy, and Christ says we must love our enemies; so He would love me." That was very clever, but not quite right.

5. Now I come to my fifth and last "Come," that I shall call *the Crowning "Come."* You will find it in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew: "*Come*, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Oh, what a glorious "come" that will be! Do you ever think of Jesus coming? Do you think He will be *alone*? No. Do you know anybody who has gone to heaven—any dear friends, relations, or anybody else? I will tell you what it will be when Jesus comes. They will come with Him; you will see them. It says so in the 4th chapter of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians: "Them also which sleep in Jesus"—the good ones who are gone to Jesus—God will take, and "bring *with him.*" Whenever you read that verse always pay great attention to the last words, "with him"—Him, *not God*, but Jesus. God will "bring *with Jesus!*" "With Him!" That is, when Jesus comes, God will take care that those dear ones gone to heaven will come "with Him." If you are there you will see them.

Now.

This "now" is not the "now" of time, but of entreaty. Spurgeon, taking the word as temporal, says, "God would not have you live another moment as you are." This is true and most important, but it belongs rather to the exposition of another text which Spurgeon appositely quotes: "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The note of the present text is tender entreaty rather than urgent warning.

¶ I remember very well, as if it were but yesterday, though it is now some five-and-twenty years ago, being present at a discussion in a little secularist or infidel hall in the east of London, where the controversy turned for a moment upon this very passage. The lecturer of the evening had had the audacity to attack the Bible on the score of its morality. He had quoted the words, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He had argued that by such language a dangerous facility was given to sin; that, if its effects and consequences could be so easily removed, there was less need for striving against the temptations to it. In the course of the discussion, there rose on the other side one who was to all appearance a common working man, not well educated, but evidently thoughtful, clear-headed, and in earnest. He quietly and very effectively called attention to the context of the passage, the two verses which precede our text. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings before from mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." This, he urged, is the true and necessary prelude to what follows: "Come now," come *when this is done*, "and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The passage, he argued, rightly understood, teaches *not* that sin is a light matter, easily condoned, *but* that only through true repentance, and through reformation, is there a way to forgiveness and absolution. So far from facilitating sin, it opposes to it the thorny and terrible obstacle of the necessity of retracing, in tears and shame and pain, the devious path, and recovering, at bitter cost, the true, but lost, direction.

The argument was sound in substance, though wrong in form. That the doctrine of the Bible, with reference to sin and repentance and forgiveness, is what the speaker represented it to be, no candid and ingenuous mind could for one moment doubt. But the

word "now" of our text,—"Come *now*,"—was being pressed into a service for which Isaiah never intended it. It is not the "now" of time. It is in the original only a word, closely connected with the preceding word (to which indeed it is actually joined in the Hebrew by a hyphen), and *emphasising* it. We could express it in English by merely laying a stress upon the word "Come": "*Come*, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." The language of the text thus becomes the language of earnest invitation, of tender entreaty. "Come, I beseech you, and let us reason," or confer, "together, saith the Eternal."[1]

ii. An Invitation to Reason.

Our text gives us the highest form of appeal—the appeal to reason. In the earlier pages of the Bible, the appeals of God to sinning men are more dramatic, tragic, in form. They are addressed to the imagination, the emotion, as if men were yet only spiritual children. In Genesis, it is the gates of Paradise closed, and the angel of the flaming sword. Later in the book, it is God directing that an ark be built, and opening the windows of heaven in a destroying flood. In Exodus, it is the smoking of Mount Sinai, God wrapt in cloud and thunder and lightning, and man standing afar off trembling, none daring to draw nigh to the Divine Presence. In David, it is the devastating plague. In Solomon, it is the sensuous richness of temple, of ritual, of sacrifice, and of cloudy incense. All as if men could be moved only by the ruder, the lower motives of their nature. But here, in Isaiah, a new order of appeal is set in action. "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me; the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." O that My people would think; "Come now, and let us reason together."

¶ Napoleon, making a forced march accompanied by his chiefs of staff, came to a river and asked the engineer how wide it was. The officer explained that his instruments had not yet come to the front. The emperor asked him again, rather sharply, for the width of the river. The officer then brought his military cap to the level of his eyes and marked where the line of vision fell on the opposite bank; fixing his attention on that

[1] David J. Vaughan.

distance he turned carefully and marked where that line fell on the bank where they were standing; he stepped the distance off and gave the emperor the width of the river. Thus in the absence of instruments of precision, he fell back on common sense. In the absence of more stirring commanding voices, let us listen to the voice of our own common sense on this matter of religion.[1]

¶ When the Forth Bridge was in the course of construction, I remember spending a most delightful and memorable afternoon with one of the leading engineers. He told me that in the vast undertaking there were encountered numerous and difficult engineering problems. Of course they had on the work the very highest mathematical skill which the country could supply, but here was the interesting fact—he told me that most of the difficulties were solved by one man who possesses no great mathematical skill, but has a kind of genius which, without formal rules, can always find its way through a difficulty. He said to me, "Just give him a difficulty, however great it is, and somehow he will come out on the other side of it." I suppose you all remember the story of John Brown, the commentator, in illustration of his belief that unless common sense is given us by Nature it cannot be acquired, and I suppose that is the general belief. Well, that may or may not be true, but reason in some of its forms is extremely capable of cultivation, and it is important to know how it can be cultivated.[2]

Reason and Faith.

1. The invitation is, "Let us *reason* together." Bishop Butler, discussing the important distinction between objections against the evidence of Christianity and objections against Christianity itself, writes in his wise and guarded way: "I express myself with caution, lest I should be taken to vilify reason; which is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself." In these days we are often inclined to be afraid of exercising our reason on any matter which trenches in any degree upon the field of revelation. We contrast reason and faith with one another, and assign faith to the domain of revelation, yielding to reason the supremacy over everything outside that domain.

2. Notwithstanding the explicit teaching of the New Testament, the impression has got abroad that faith and reason are

[1] R. Mackenzie. [2] J. Stalker.

opposed to each other, that both cannot flourish in the same man at the same time; that if a man wants to be a man of faith, he must not think deeply, and that if he gives free rein to his reason it is likely to go hard with his faith. In many a circle it is taken for granted that if a man becomes a Christian, he must allow his mind to be shackled, and that if he wishes to think freely and to follow the truth whithersoever it may lead him, he had better not attach himself to the Church.

Now a more mischievous impression could not possibly get abroad. Joseph Glanvill, near the middle of the seventeenth century, wrote this: "There is not anything that I know which hath done more mischief to religion than the disparaging of reason, for hereby the very foundations of Christian faith have been undermined. If reason must not be heard, the being of God and the authority of Scripture can neither be proved nor defended; and so our faith drops to the ground like a house that hath no foundation." If that was true in the seventeenth century, it is doubly true nowadays, for the entire world is using its intellect as never before.

¶ There are Christians in all parts of the country who are secretly afraid of reason. They do not like to think themselves, they see no necessity for thinking, they feel that if a man thinks about the doctrines of his faith he is almost certain to become a heretic. The man who thinks is to them what Cassius was to Julius Cæsar. "Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look; he thinks too much." They prefer men who are sleek and fat. They make religion merely a sentimental and emotional thing; they put no thought into it. They speak of doctrines as something quite superfluous. They take no interest in doctrines, and as for a dogma, it is nothing but a cur to be kicked about the streets. And as for theology, that is something to be steadily eschewed. Theology, instead of being what it is, the greatest of the sciences, is to them only a foolish piece of stupid speculation. It is just such Christians as these who perpetuate the impression that Christianity has nothing to do with the reason, but moves entirely in the realm of the emotions.[1]

3. No doubt the use of certain words has had not a little to do with deepening this impression.

(1) An infidel is usually known as a *free thinker*. The first man who rejected Christianity, and then called himself a "free

[1] C. E. Jefferson.

thinker," builded better than he knew. That epithet was a telling stroke of genius. The word itself contains an argument against the Christian religion. If a man who rejects Christianity is a free thinker, the implication is that the man who accepts it is a bound thinker—a man whose reason is in chains. But the implication is not fair. A Christian has a right to think just as freely as any other man. All Christians, if they avail themselves of their privileges, are free thinkers. I studied pedagogy first, says Mr. Jefferson,[1] and then law, and then theology. I was first a teacher, then a lawyer, and then a preacher. But I never thought any more freely when I was a teacher or a lawyer than I have thought since I became a preacher.

(2) The use of the word *rationalist* has also been misleading. The word came into common use in the sixteenth century to designate the class of people who gave an exalted place to reason, and the word was seized upon by certain infidel philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who became known throughout the world as Rationalists. The word carries with it the implication that a man who accepts Christianity is an irrationalist; that is, he does not use his reason. If a man reasons, he rejects Christianity; if he refuses to reason, he accepts it. The insinuation is unjust. All Christians are rationalists, or ought to be, in the sense that they make a vigorous use of their minds. The Christian religion is a rational religion, and the evidences for it are rational. It addresses itself primarily to the reason.

(3) The word *reason* is commonly used loosely. What men call reason is nothing but opinion. A certain man asserts in my presence that the narrative of the Virgin Birth is contrary to reason. He says it very blandly, and with great assurance. But I remind him that a distinguished professor of philosophy, who has one of the finest and keenest minds in America, says that the story is not contrary to his reason. Nor is it contrary to the reason of ten thousand men who read it and believe it, and feel it to be altogether reasonable. It is not correct then for you, my friend, to say that the story is contrary to reason. What you mean to say is that it is contrary to *your* reason, and that, you know, is another thing. But are you sure that it is

[1] *Things Fundamental*, p. 36.

really contrary to your reason? What you are probably trying to say is that it is contrary to your opinion.

But opinion is one thing and human reason is another. Opinion is the product of a man's reading and thinking and hearing. What a man thinks on any subject depends on what he has read and heard and thought. It is for this cause that men's opinions change from year to year. We hold a certain opinion, and then we read more widely, or live more deeply, and our opinion changes. When you are saying, therefore, that the story of Christ's birth is contrary to your opinion, you are not saying anything of great significance, for your opinion might change after more extensive reading, or after a little deeper thinking. I travel into Alaska and meet an Eskimo who has never heard of the X-rays, and I say to him, "I have seen every bone in that hand of mine. I know the size and shape and exact location of every bone just as clearly as I should know all this if the flesh were scraped away." And he looks at me with surprise, and says, "That is contrary to reason." What the man is trying to say is that it is contrary to his opinion. We should not expect an Eskimo to use language accurately; we might expect it, however, of a New Yorker. Or I travel into the South Seas, and I meet a man there who has never so much as heard of ice, and I say, "My southern friend, I walked across a lake one day in February, and never even got my feet wet." And he throws up his hands in amazement, and says, "That is contrary to reason." What he is trying to say is that it is contrary to his experience. When the evangelist tells me that Jesus walked across a Palestinian lake in April, I have no right to say that it is contrary to my reason. It is contrary to my experience. But my experience is rather a diminutive affair. If I am to cut down Christianity to the dimensions of my experience, I shall not have anything left of surpassing value. The fact is, Christ transcends my experience at every point. What He said runs as far beyond me as what He did. "I do always those things that are pleasing unto him." That is farther beyond me than walking on the water. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." I never could say a thing like that.[1]

[1] C. E. Jefferson.

¶ Often the very men who make the loudest profession of acting reasonably have the very least reason in their action. I try to convince a certain man that the sunset is beautiful. I say, "Oh, look at it! Could anything be more glorious!" And he stands with his back to the sunset and will not look at it. He says, "I do not believe what you say. Prove it to me." And I say, "Turn round and look." He says, "I won't." Is he reasonable? I endeavour to persuade another man that Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is great. The orchestra is playing, the instruments are sweeping through the allegro, and I say to this man, "Wagner was right. Instruments cannot carry music higher than that. If music is to travel any farther, it must be by the human voice. Is not that fine?" And the man puts his fingers in his ears, and says, "I do not believe what you say. Prove it to me." And I say, "Listen!" And he says, "I won't." Is he reasonable? I endeavour to persuade another man that a violet is fragrant. I say to him, "This odour is so delicate. Just smell it!" He says, "I won't. Prove it to me." I say, "Will you smell it?" He says, "No." Is he reasonable? I endeavour to persuade another man that sugar is sweet. I say, "This sugar is sweet. I have eaten a piece just like this." He says, "I do not believe it." I say to him, "Taste it." He says, "I won't." Is he reasonable? I endeavour to persuade another man that a cube of gold is heavier than a cube of iron. Both are of the same size. I say to him, "Take the gold in one hand and the iron in the other, and you will see." And he says, "I won't." Is he reasonable? I endeavour to persuade another man to become a Christian. I say to him, "Jesus Christ is sufficient for every need of the human soul." And he says, "I do not believe it." I say to him, "Try Him!" And he says, "I won't." Is he reasonable?

¶ It was only yesterday I saw a plea for calm reflection in international affairs, sent abroad by an ethical society, in all the chief languages of Europe. It is just a plea for the application of the principles of our Christian morality to every part of our national life. I make no apology for quoting a word or two from this utterance, for in my judgment they are the words of Christian truth.

"Remember," it says, "that reason and justice alone should decide the merits of any case, whether it be personal or national, national or international. Remember that no nation can safely be the judge in its own cause, because self-interest and pride and anger and force are so liable to pervert the judgment and distort the truth. Remember that as friendly international relations are of vital importance to every people, the time is

surely ripe for arbitration to supersede war. Remember, therefore, to press upon your Government," said this utterance, "the duty of entering into specific agreement for peace, and, instead of war, to proceed by the method of arbitration. Remember that the cost of competitive armaments not only involves a crushing burden for each people to bear, and consequent neglect of social improvement, but engenders bitter feeling, and is provocative of strife. Remember in time of peace the horrors of war, and the harvest of hatred and misery it leaves behind, and ask yourself, each citizen, ask yourself whether it is not criminal to leave it to passion or ignorance, to misunderstandings, or jealousies, or self-interest, to bring any such calamity upon the life of a Christian nation."[1]

iii. An Invitation to Reason together.

The invitation is not merely, "Let us reason"; but, "Let us reason *together*." Our reasonings on revelation, and on all the high and mysterious subjects associated with it, must proceed in the full recognition of what is implied in this "*together*." We may reason, if we are minded to do so, upon the Trinity, upon the Incarnation, upon the Atonement, upon Final Judgment, upon the Restitution of all things; upon any subject, however lofty and transcendent; provided only our reasonings ever be "*together*";—that is, *with God*,—as those, to whom God is speaking, and with whom God is reasoning; and who are therefore constrained to reason back—if I may be allowed the expression—in all childlike humility and simplicity, reverence and awe;—not as though *we* were the measure of all things, as the old Sophists maintained that man was,—but in the full recognition of the limitation of our faculties and the poverty of our intellectual resources, and at the same time in the full belief of St. Paul's words: "*Now* we see through a glass, darkly; but *then*, face to face; *now* I know in part, but *then* shall I know, even as also I am known." It has been well said by a great thinker of this century, adopting the language of one of the greatest of the fathers of the Christian Church: "The foundation of our philosophy is humility." The moment we strive to answer to the invitation, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord," we shall find that it must be so. No other attitude of mind is possible for us.

When a responsible being has made a wrong use of his

[1] Bishop J. Percival.

powers, nothing is more reasonable than that he should call himself to account for this abuse. Nothing, certainly, is more necessary. There can be no amendment for the future until the past has been cared for. But that this examination may be both thorough and profitable, it must be made *in company with the Searcher of hearts.* For there are always two beings who are concerned with sin; the being who commits it, and the Being against whom it is committed. We sin, indeed, against ourselves; against our own conscience, and against our own best interest. But we sin in a yet higher, and more terrible sense, against Another than ourselves, compared with whose majesty all of our faculties and interests, both in time and in eternity, are altogether nothing and vanity. It is not enough, therefore, to refer our sin to the law written on the heart, and there stop. We must ultimately pass beyond conscience itself, to God, and say, "Against *Thee* have I sinned." It is not the highest expression of the religious feeling when we say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against my conscience?" He alone has reached the summit of vision who looks beyond all finite limits, however wide and distant, beyond all finite faculties, however noble and elevated, and says, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

¶ Modern history began in the year 1521 when an Augustinian monk, by the name of Martin Luther, went to the Diet of Worms to give an account of himself to the Emperor of Germany. The appearance of Luther before the emperor is a picture that ought to be burned into the retina of the eyes of every young man in America. It is April, and evening has come. The torches have been lighted, and they cast a flickering glow over the faces of the earnest men who have come together to hear this monk from Wittenberg. As Luther goes through the door, the greatest general of Germany taps him on the shoulder and says, "My poor monk, my poor monk, you are on the way to make such a stand as I have never made in my toughest battle." And what the general said was true. The emperor is there, the electors, and the princes of Germany are there. In front of the king there is a table on which are piled books which this Augustinian monk has written. Luther is now thirty-eight years old. For over fifteen years he has been a monk. The fundamental principles of the Roman Catholic Church have been built into his mind. But as a student he has learned that the church councils can make mistakes. He has said so, and has said so openly. The question before the Diet of Worms

is: Will this Augustinian monk recant? The emperor tells him haughtily that he is not there to question matters which have been settled in general councils long ago, and that what he wants is a plain answer without horns, whether he will retract what he has said contradicting the decisions of the Council of Constance. Luther rises to reply, and this is what he says: "Since your Imperial Majesty requires a plain answer, I will give one without horns or hoofs. It is this, that I must be convinced either by the testimony of Scripture or by clear argument. I cannot trust the pope or councils by themselves, for both have erred. I cannot and will not retract." An awful silence falls upon them all. And then the Augustinian monk continues: "I can do nothing else. Here I stand. So help me God. Amen."

But in what way can God approach a man in order to reason with him? There are more ways than one.

1. First, and clearly, He may reason through *Conscience.*

It will be admitted that the first requisite of all moral improvement is that there should be thoughtfulness, seriousness, attention to our conduct. We often hear the excuse, "I did not give it a thought"; to which the only reply can be, "But you *ought* to have given it." Self-recollection and self-collection are essential to sound speech, true thought, wise action. And what are these again but a partial human answer to the Divine invitation, "Come, and let us reason together"? It would make that answer far less partial, much more complete, if, when we enter into the innermost chamber of the soul to reflect and collect ourselves, we would remember *who* meets us there, and *whose* shrine that chamber is. It is the Eternal Himself who meets us there. The Apostle's words are true: "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own."

There is, indeed, no human soul surely that has failed at some time or another to be in debate with itself. And what is implied in this? Most certainly condemnation of some course of conduct which seems at the moment preferable; most certainly also a rule, external to the soul, which claims, and on all occasions, to be imperial.

¶ Two anecdotes may be given of the way in which the word "conscience" is understood by children. A Sunday-school teacher asked the question of her class, "What is that within you which makes you uneasy when you have done wrong?"

After some hesitation, a small boy with a healthy appetite answered, in a very Scotch accent, "Ma stomach."

¶ The other anecdote is from James Vaughan, of Brighton. A gentleman was examining a class in a Sunday school and he said to the children, "What is conscience?" They were all much puzzled. One of the big boys said, "It is too big a word for me." The gentleman then said, "Did you ever feel anything inside you which seemed to say, 'You ought not to have done this or that,' or, 'Go and do that; go and pray'?" "Oh yes, sir," they all said, "we all have heard that." Then the gentleman said again, "What is conscience?" And little Benny said, "It is Jesus whispering in the heart." That was a little boy's answer. It was very beautiful. There are many of these "whispers of Jesus to the heart."

2. But again, the soul is instructed by *the Providence of God.*

The Bible, from beginning to end, is ever exhibiting this blessed truth. The beautiful stories of the earlier patriarchs, the incidental episodes (such as the sweet picture of dutiful devotion in the Book of Ruth), the proclamation of the prophets, the tender verses of the Psalms, as well as the history of the Chosen People, conspire to witness to the consoling fact that "the Lord careth for His people." And what is the general lesson learnt? Conscience says, "Sin," "a Judge." Providence says, "Care, and watchful love," "a Father"; both teach us that God neither does nor permits anything, except to certain ends before Him conformable to His nature of righteousness. The solemn thought is this, that men may, by deliberate, continued sin, frustrate the loving purpose in themselves; but "God is not mocked," they shall not frustrate the righteous end.

3. And lastly, God instructs the soul of the creature by *the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Conscience speaks of sin and judgment; Providence of watchful, regulated care. What does Jesus Christ teach? (1) In His example, as exhibited in the Gospel, He shows us a righteousness so transcendent that it corroborates the teachings of conscience, a course of action of such unvarying tenderness that it illustrates and manifests the providence of God; (2) He gives the most vivid, the most appalling revelation of the mystery and magnitude of human sin; but with it—what conscience could never do—of the most loving, most complete

forgiveness to the penitent, and the brightest hope (after sorrow) as to human destiny, in the tragedy—the love-marked tragedy —of the Passion; (3) And beyond that He displays to us a prospect and a power of attainment to the heights of spiritual longing, by revealing the method and confirming the promise of the implanting of His own life, of His own image, ever more and more fully in the soul of His creature, which is the daily, hourly work of God's blessed Spirit in those who diligently seek Him.

Gracious Spirit, dwell with me;
I myself would gracious be,
And with words that help and heal
Would Thy life in mine reveal,
And with actions bold and meek
Would for Christ my Saviour speak.

Truthful Spirit, dwell with me;
I myself would truthful be,
And with wisdom kind and clear
Let Thy life in mine appear,
And with actions brotherly
Speak my Lord's sincerity.

Silent Spirit, dwell with me;
I myself would quiet be,
Quiet as the growing blade
Which through earth its way has made,
Silently, like morning light,
Putting mists and chills to flight.

Mighty Spirit, dwell with me;
I myself would mighty be,
Mighty so as to prevail
Where unaided man must fail,
Ever by a mighty hope
Pressing on and bearing up.

Holy Spirit, dwell with me;
I myself would holy be;
Separate from sin, I would
Choose and cherish all things good,
And whatever I can be,
Give to Him, who gave to Thee.[1]

[1] Thomas Toke Lynch.

II.

THE REASONING AND ITS RESULT.

i. The Subject of the Reasoning.

In the immediate case before us, the case of God's ancient people of Israel, the subject of argument was their conduct, especially the ingratitude of it in the light of all that God had done for them. But the subject is broader than that. In this very chapter, there is a threefold basis of reasoning, which is of universal application.

1. First of all, God reasons with man *on the basis of man's whole life.* There is a constant attempt on man's part—a device that is repeated from generation to generation and from age to age—to withdraw the greater portion of man's life from God's reasoning, or, in other words, to endeavour to reason with God on the basis of some lesser and limited portion of life. You can see it very clearly throughout this chapter. God said to man, "Come, let us reason together." "Very well," says man, "let this be the ground of our reasoning. Look at my life as it lies within the circle of its religious action and exercises, the sacrifices I bring to you, the incense I offer, the fasts I make. Let us reason on that basis; let us take our stand there." And as you will see in this chapter, God utterly rejects reasoning like this, and says, "No, no; I must deal with you on the basis of your whole life, not on any limited or selected part of it which you choose to present and urge." Now there is great significance in this connection in the opening words of this chapter. God cries out and says, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth"; man is saying, "Let me be judged and reasoned with on the basis of my life, as that life lies within certain narrow limits, on the basis of my life regarded specially in its religious aspects. Look at me when I am present in the Temple, when I bring my gifts to the altar; deal with me on that ground, let that be the basis of reasoning." God cries out to earth and heaven, and says, "These are the only limits of man's life I can recognise—the earth on which he walks, on the surface of which everything is done, the heavens over his head, which look down upon every transaction of his life; that is the basis of My reasoning, and that alone."

2. God reasons with men on *the basis of His own Fatherhood.*

You will see how in this chapter He reminds all men of it, gives men proofs of it, tells men He has fulfilled it in relation to them. He says, "You are not simply My creatures. You are more—you are nearer to Me. I have done more for you. Hear, O heavens; give ear, O earth. I have nourished and brought up these children; that is My plea." He declares His Fatherhood by calling them children. He says, "It is not a name with Me; I have fulfilled a Father's part; you owe everything to Me. Look at your life and see what it looks like in the light of this relationship which I have sustained and fulfilled towards you. Admit," He says, "My Fatherhood—and you cannot but admit it—and what does your life look like in the light of it? How unnatural and base it becomes. You sink below the brute, you are steeped in more absolute stupidity than the ox or the ass, for the ox knoweth its owner and the ass its master's crib, but Israel does not know My people." This is God's reasoning, and who of us can stand against it? God, our Father, to whom we owe our being, from whom all gifts have come to us, upon whom we depend for everything—what has been our conduct towards Him? "I have nourished and brought up children, and ye have rebelled against Me, flung off My authority, despised My love, lifted your hands against Me"—what can we say to reasoning like this? We cannot excuse ourselves, we cannot justify ourselves; we can only hang our heads in silence and in shame while God says, "Come, and let us bring this reasoning to an end—you know you have nothing to say; admit it."

3. Thus in this chapter also God reasons with man on *the basis of sin's results.* He says, "You have rebelled against Me; has it justified itself in its success? You have rebelled against Me; what good has it done you? Has it brought you freedom and happiness? Has it brought to the land and the nation peace and prosperity?" God Himself gives the answer in searching and terrible words: "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores; and your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire—that is what sin has done for you." He points them to the terrible and pitiful results which have come

to pass for the individual and the nation through their disobedience towards God; and He challenges them and says, "Now look at it as I have reasoned it out with you."[1]

ii. The Result of the Reasoning.

There is, there can be, but one result—our sins are as scarlet; they are red like crimson. "Scarlet" and "crimson" are really synonyms for the one colour, properly "crimson." According to the Biblical view, sin and piety, anger and love or grace are mutually related as fire and light, hence as red and white; for red is the colour of the fire that shines up now out of the darkness and returns into it, while white, without any mixture of darkness, sets forth the pure, absolute triumph of light.

¶ In a Chinese proclamation, issued by H.H. Tseng Kuo Fan, the energetic official who helped to suppress the Tai Ping Rebellion, there is this sentence referring to the depredations of the rebels. "There is no temple they do not burn, no image they do not destroy. The deities are enraged, they will cool their anger" (in their destruction). The phrase is literally "snow their anger," anger being regarded as both hot and red.[2]

1. Their sins were crimson *because they were committed in the face of the light.* It is a matter of common sense that the servant who knows the master's will, and yet disobeys, is worthy of more stripes than he who knows it less perfectly. The sinners to whom Isaiah preached, under the more complete revelation of the covenant of grace, sinned against clearer light than the sinners to whom Moses and Joshua preached. How much more, even than those to whom the prophet is preaching, do sinners now sin against the clearer light who have in their hands the last and complete development of the New Testament covenant of grace; and over and above this, the knowledge of the outworking of the completed scheme of grace, under His providence, through two thousand years.

2. They were crimson, *because they were committed against special reasons for gratitude and well-doing.* Listen to that pathetic complaint: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner,

[1] W. Perkins.
[2] W. A. Cornaby, *A String of Chinese Peach Stones.*

and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa. i. 2, 3). And of whom speaketh He this? Not of Israel only. Which of us can recall an hour of life unmarked by some blessing from God? Mercies have been showered upon us. Blessings have been bestowed upon our country, our friends, our family, ourselves—mercies of providence and mercies of grace. Through the whole journey of life we tread upon God's blessings, strewn as flowers in our way, and their perfume fills the very air we breathe.

3. Their sins were crimson, *because they were committed against special covenants and vows.* They were sins of faithlessness and recklessness. Is it not so that among men the breach of a solemn bond is more to be reprehended than failure to meet any other engagement? This was the special aggravation of the sin of those to whom the prophet preached. They were solemnly engaged by covenants with Abraham, with Moses, and with David, to be peculiarly Jehovah's people, as He to be peculiarly their God and Redeemer. In this regard, their sins were more aggravated than those of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose cry ascended up to heaven, and brought down the fires of vengeance. For besides the intrinsic wickedness of doing the deeds of Sodom and Gomorrah, these sinners in so sinning added the guilt of faithlessness to their solemn vows and the vows of their fathers. And it is this that gives their peculiar aggravation to the sins of such as have formally and publicly entered into the covenant of Jehovah in our day. They add to the intrinsic guilt of their transgressions this violation of solemn faith pledged. And on this account it is that their sins are also the most hurtful in their influence, by bringing reproach on the religion of Jesus Christ, as a religion that hinders not its professors from being found faithless.

¶ It was no figure of speech, it was no morbid self-depreciation, St. Paul spoke the real language of his heart when he called himself "the chief of sinners." I greatly mistrust the state of that man who cannot, at this moment, truly and honestly, lay his hand upon his heart, and say this: "I do not believe that there ever was a more wicked man upon the face of the whole earth than I am." For only a man's heart knows its own wickedness. Only a man's own heart knows the aggravations of his own guilt before Almighty God. It is not a question of acts; it is a matter of

thoughts. It is not only what we are positively; it is what we are negatively. It does not depend on what stands in the foreground, but upon what lies behind in the background. It is the convictions you have resisted; it is the feelings God has put into you; it is the early advantages you enjoyed in the nursery, with a pious mother and a holy father; it is the glimpses of particular providences, and the still small voices you have heard; it is the name you have borne, and the profession you have made; it is the hedges you have thrown around you, and the barriers you have overleaped; it is the love you have put away from you, and the grace you have quenched—it is these which make a man's sins glare before God, like red-hot under an Eastern sun,—it is these which cause a man's sins to be steeped sevenfold, like the fastest crimson.[1]

III.

THE SURPRISING SEQUEL.

The sequel of the reasoning is that sins which are scarlet become white as show, sins which are crimson become as wool. Acknowledgment of the utter sinfulness of the heart and life is followed by pardon, cleansing, and new obedience.

"I recollect," says Spurgeon, "that I used to say to myself, when I was quite a lad, 'If God does not punish me for my sin, He ought to do so.' That thought used to come to me again and again. I felt that God was just, and that He knew that I did not wish Him to be anything but just; for even my imperfect knowedge of God included my recognition that He was a just and holy God. If I could have been certain of salvation by any method in which God would have ceased to be just, I could not have accepted even salvation on those terms; I should have felt that it was derogatory to the dignity of the Most High, and that it was contrary to the universal laws of right. But this was the question that puzzled me—How can I be saved, since I have sinned, and sin must be punished? You see, in our text, the blessed answer which the Lord Himself gives, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' That is to say, the Lord means, 'You shall have no sin to be punished, for I will so effectively remove it that there shall be

[1] J. Vaughan.

none left upon you. I will be as sternly just to you as a righteous and holy God must be, yet I shall not smite you, for I see nothing in you, or upon you, which I ought to smite.' O wondrous miracle of mercy and grace!"

This sequel to the reasoning is surprising enough in its completeness and comprehensiveness, and yet it follows naturally (1) from God's character, (2) from God's promise, (3) from the nature of God's forgiveness.

1. *God's Character.* He who has seriously "reasoned together" with God is far better prepared to find God in the forgiveness of sins than he who has merely brooded over his own unhappiness without any reference to the qualities and claims of his Judge. It has been a plain and personal matter throughout, and having now come to a clear conviction that he is a guilty sinner, he turns directly to the great and good Being who stands immediately before him, and prays to be forgiven, and *is* forgiven.

One reason why the soul so often gropes days and months without finding a sin-pardoning God lies in the fact that its thoughts and feelings respecting religious subjects, and particularly respecting the state of the heart, have been too vague and indistinct. They have not had an immediate and close reference to the one single Being who is most directly concerned, and who alone can minister to a mind diseased. The soul is wretched, and there may be some sense of sin, but there is no one to go to—no one to address with an appealing cry. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him," is its language. "Oh that I might come even to His seat. Behold I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him." But this groping would cease were there a clear view of God.

This suggests two practical directions—

(1) In all states of religious anxiety we should *betake ourselves directly to God.* There is no other refuge for the human soul but God in Christ, and if this fails us, we must renounce all hope here and hereafter.

> If this fail,
> The pillared firmament is rottenness,
> And earth's base built on stubble.
> (Milton, *Comus*, 597–599.)

(2) In all our religious anxiety, we should *make a full and plain statement of everything to God.* God loves to hear the details of our sin, and our woe. The soul that pours itself out as water will find that it is not like water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Even when the story is one of shame and remorse, we find it to be mental relief, patiently and without any reserve or palliation, to expose the whole not only to our own eye but to that of our Judge. For, to this very thing have we been invited. This is precisely the "reasoning together" which God proposes to us.

¶ I believe in a man having a place of private resort for the consideration of all the bearings of his life. I have had such places ever since I could remember. I have occasion to go back to them, in recollection, with joy and thanksgiving. Places in far-away quiet fields, where I used to go between school hours and bend my knees behind some blossoming hawthorn hedge, or some old, old tree, and there, as a mere boy in his teens, talk to God till the tears started and life seemed to be going out of me in one great painful shudder. But oh! the sweetness of those hours! One came back even to play and enjoyments of a boyish kind, and work, and suffering, with new life and new hope.[1]

2. *God's Promise.* God would not have made the demand for reform unless it were possible for man to meet it. Where is the power to meet it to come from? Only two answers are possible: either it is inherent in man—this is the answer of nature; or it is supplied from without—this is the answer of grace. The former is the basis of all human efforts which have been or are being put forth to reform the world; the latter is the basis of the Divine method.

(1) *The answer of Nature.* — The belief in the ability of man to reform himself is founded on ignorance of the real nature of his moral condition, as was the case in the pagan world, or on a deliberate refusal to recognise the truth when it is presented concerning that condition, as was the case in Judaism, and is the case at the present day with those who persuade themselves to a belief in the infinite intrinsic capability of human nature. I see no reason, says the modern enthusiast, why a man, given the necessary favourable environments,—

[1] J. Parker.

which happily are in a fair way to be supplied,—should not, by a little effort, become perfectly good; why he should not so live as to be able to defy every law in heaven and on earth. Is any one really justified by history or by experience in taking such a view of the question? Neither the religion of the pagan world, nor the philosophy of the Greeks, nor the power and civilisation of the Romans—of their religion we say nothing, for it was unworthy of the name—afford much ground for this belief in human nature. Nor could even the Mosaic law by itself awaken in man a power which would enable him to become righteous—"in that it was weak through the flesh." The witness whether of history or of experience little encourages belief in the capacity of human nature to reform itself.

¶ All great dramatists and novelists insist upon the fact that sinners cannot cleanse themselves from the inevitable stain which sin always leaves. Shakespeare has painted this truth in its most glaring colours in *Macbeth*. Macbeth speaks after the murder.

"Whence is that knocking?
How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes!
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red."

Lady Macbeth. "My hands are of your colour, but I shame
To wear a heart so white. (*Knock*). I hear a knocking
At the south entry: retire we to our chamber:
A little water clears us of this deed:
How easy is it, then!"

But in the night time, walking in her sleep, Lady Macbeth is conscious that she cannot remove the stain left by the murder of Banquo:—

Gent. "It is an accustom'd action with her, to seem thus washing her hands: I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour."

Lady Macbeth. "Yet here's a spot. . . . Out, damnèd spot! out, I say!—One, two; why, then 'tis time to do't.—Hell is murky!—Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?—Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? . . . Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!"

¶ "There is a lonely little pool of water in a hollow on the mountainside near Tarbet, Loch Lomond, called the Fairy Loch. If you look into it you will see a great many colours in the water, owing to the varied nature of the materials that form its bottom. There is a legend about it which says that the fairies used to dye things for the people round about, if a specimen of the colour was left along with the cloth on the brink of the pool at sunset. One evening a shepherd left beside the Fairy Loch the fleece of a black sheep, and placed upon it a white woollen thread to show that he wished the fleece dyed white. This fairly puzzled the good folk. They could dye a white fleece any colour: but to make a black fleece white was impossible. In despair they threw all their colours into the loch, giving it its present strange look, and disappeared for ever."[1]

(2) *The answer of Grace.*—A power from without is absolutely necessary to enable man to meet the demand for reform. This power is God's forgiveness. "Come now, and let us reason together," or better, "let us end the dispute"; "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Although the demand precedes the offer of forgiveness, we are not to suppose that the work of reforming is to precede the enjoyment of the Divine gift. That indeed were impossible. The demand is stated first, in order to invite our attention to the special duty we are called upon to perform; but simultaneously we are invited to contemplate the Divine settlement of the dispute by the offer of pardon on God's side; and this assurance of pardon awakens within us a desire, and imparts to us a prayer, to do our duty; in a word, to reform. This then is the appropriate gift for this task, or rather, we ought to say, this is the particular form in which the fulness of Divine love is given for this special work. As every duty of man is summed up in the command to reform, so all the riches of grace are summed up in the gift of pardon.

3. *God's Pardon.* What peculiar virtue or power does pardon possess for producing a change of life?

(1) First it induces the resolution to reform, then becomes a power in the penitent man to help him to carry out his resolution. Pardon thus bridges the chasm which exists between a knowledge of duty and the doing of it. Many, we believe, are

[1] Hugh Macmillan.

convicted of sin, and even repent, but stop there. A belief in the Divine forgiveness, moreover, would lead them on to the sphere of actual reform. As pardon soothes the troubled mind under conviction of sin, so it stimulates the perverse will to good action, and supplies the heart with a sufficiently strong motive power to all well-doing.

¶ Matthew Arnold has not been a kind critic of religion—his teachings about this very book are one-sided and unsatisfactory; but, at least, with all his faults, he has given us one lesson, he has accentuated it so strongly that it cannot easily pass away from our minds, and we certainly cannot be too anxious to reduce it to practice. The lesson is that the greater part of religion is conduct—not singing of hymns, not offering of prayers, not gathering in sanctuaries, not giving in collections, but conduct.[1]

(2) Another function of pardon, and perhaps the most important of all in the reformation of character, is that it removes, or rather is itself, as its name implies, the removal of sin. The scarlet shall become as snow, the crimson as wool. The figure is suggestive, being the colour of blood, and blood the emblem of crime, while wool and snow are the emblems of purity. To divest the language of its figures, it seems to mean that pardon will convert the criminal into a saint: this is its function. The pagan world knew nothing of this, and yet it is the only power to convert mankind. Where wisdom, justice, and law failed, pardon succeeds. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

When sin itself is removed in forgiveness, all its consequences, too, will soon vanish; and lightened of our burden, we shall feel free and ready to undertake the duties of the new life. How could we command the energy to do them while we were

> From scalp to sole one slough and crust of sin,
> Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven? Scarce meet
> For troops of devils, mad with blasphemy.

But now we are delivered from the law, having died unto that wherein we were held, so that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Being delivered from

[1] J. Guinness Rogers.

Those lead-like tons of sin that crushed
The spirit flat before Thee,

our hearts begin to beat new life, our drooping souls revive; we will undertake now cheerfully to master the grand lesson—"Cease to do evil; learn to do well."[1]

¶ There is no tree in the world so thorny or so gnarled or so knotty that men cannot smooth it and polish it and trim it and make it fair to see; and even so, there is not a man in this world so wicked or so great a sinner that God cannot convert him and adorn him with singular graces and with manifold gifts of virtue.[2]

Whiter than snow her infant lay
In Mary's arms that happy day:
Fairer than all the flowers that blow,
Brighter than all the stars that glow,
Sky blossoms in the milky way.

Thus I present Him, when I pray,
As in the arms of faith, and say,
"Father, there is one Life below,
Whiter than snow."

That whiteness pleads my cause, I know,
And wins for me the grace to show
Some reflex rays while here I stray—
Pledge I shall wear the pure array
In which the heavenly armies go
Whiter than snow.

[1] R. E. Morris, in *The Welsh Pulpit of To-day*, p. 309.
[2] *Little Flowers of St. Francis.*—Temple Edition, p. 272.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SWORD.

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The Transformation of the Sword.

And he shall judge between the nations, and shall reprove many peoples and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.—ii. 4.

It is a great vision that the prophet sees—of a world transformed by religion and common sense. The nations which are now ready to fly at each other's throats will one day, he sees, be willing to take their cases to Zion for arbitration; as we should say to-day, they will submit them to Jesus, to have them decided by the principles of justice and humanity, which are identified with Him more than with any other force in the world. And then, so reasonable and satisfactory will the decision be, that they will transform their weapons of war into instruments of peace, and men will be brothers the world over.

I.

Why should the Nations learn War no more?

1. *Because it is so costly.*

The cost of war is simply appalling. We cannot possibly have any adequate idea of what all the wars of the world have cost. The late Henry Richard, Secretary of the Peace Society, said, "Give me the money which has been spent in war, and I will purchase every foot of land on the globe. I will clothe every man, woman, and child in an attire of which kings and queens would be proud; I will build a schoolhouse on every hillside and in every valley over the whole earth; I will build an academy in every town and endow it, a college in every State, and will fill it with able professors; I will crown every hill with

a place of worship consecrated to the promulgation of the gospel of peace; I will support in every pulpit an able teacher of righteousness, so that on every Sabbath morning the chime on one hill should answer the chime on another round the world's wide circumference, and the voice of prayer and the song of praise should ascend like a universal offering to heaven."

¶ According to reliable calculations, in less than three hundred years there has been spent in the game of human slaughter £1,500,000,000, drawn in taxes from the hard earnings of the workers of the country. The world's wars during the nineteenth century amounted to nearly £4,000,000,000. About 16s. in every £1 raised in taxes has to be paid for existing armaments, and for interest on the National Debt, £788,000,000, incurred mainly by previous wars. All the European States are groaning under the taxation required to maintain their armaments. Some of them are almost crushed by a debt which borders on bankruptcy. The wealth, the strength, the skill which should be devoted to schools, orphanages, hospitals, the better housing of the poor, and old age pensions, are year by year more and more absorbed by the most gigantic preparations for warfare which the world has ever seen.[1]

Take some few points connected with the war in South Africa, remembering that the losses on the Boer side were at least equal to the British: killed in action, 2657; died of wounds in South Africa, 670; died of disease, 4337—total deaths, 7810; total wounded, 12,209; invalids sent home, 19,277. Add to these the death of some 400,000 horses and mules, together with a debt of £250,000,000; besides £20,000,000 a year ever since the war in increased taxation.

Take next the awful slaughter of Russians and Japanese in the Russo-Japanese war, which is unparalleled in the history of the world. Of the Japanese there were killed and wounded, 218,429, besides of their sick, 221,326; total, 439,755 sufferers. Add to these the Russian losses, and the number will be nearly a million wrecked and injured men in this one war. Arbitration would have prevented this awful catastrophe.

Or take the Crimean War, which started from a trifling quarrel over the protection of holy places in Palestine, and was developed by Napoleon III. mainly for the selfish purpose of establishing his own dynasty by means of a great European war. That war cost the Western Powers 428,000 men, and the Russians 325,000. It cost England, moreover, £69,000,000 directly, and £63,000,000 indirectly. The whole of that war was sheer and useless waste of life and money, and no satisfactory object was gained.

[1] D. S. Govett.

¶ "My heart is broken," wrote Wellington on the morrow of Waterloo, "by the terrible loss I have sustained in my old friends and companions, and my poor soldiers. Believe me," he said, "nothing except a battle lost can be half so melancholy as a battle won."

¶ Vereschagin, the greatest military painter of the nineteenth century, has expressed himself upon the subject of war in these terms: "I am not a military painter at all. I paint war scenes because they are very interesting. War is the loss of all human sense; under its influence men become animals entirely. The artist looks always for passion, and passion is seen at its height on the battlefield. This is why war attracts me, as it must always attract artists and authors too. Every hour brings something new, something never seen before, something outside the range of ordinary human life; it is the *reversal of Christianity*, and for the artist, the author, and the philosopher it must always have a supreme interest. But what a foolish game it is! Here, men are being shot down like cattle; there, sisters of mercy are picking them up and trying to heal their wounds. A man no sooner falls than he is taken into the hospital, where men with broken limbs lie in hundreds or thousands; and while gentle women are tenderly caring for them, assuaging their agony, and lessening, as much as they can, their almost unbearable pain, men are falling like rain not far away. What nonsense. How stupid to wound a man to heal his wound again. The savages are the only logical warriors I know. They kill their enemies and eat them."

2. *Because it is so cruel.*

How incredibly brutal it all is! The passionate fury of the fight, how terrible its power! How it lays hold of us! Who dares, in cold blood, to bring before his imagination the horror of the battle-scene? No one can believe it as he really tries to think it out. The pictures of the illustrated papers in war-time, the brilliant descriptions of correspondents, these turn us sick at the first look; and then we get used to them—get used to them just because we cannot present such hideous cruelties to our imagination in real flesh and blood. As we read the wearisome repetitions of wounds and death, it becomes to us like some bad dream, some nightmare—it cannot be really happening. We do not believe it. I shall never forget how this incredibility of it all came upon me once, when I passed out of the door of a panorama of the battle of Wörth, at Cologne—a panorama where everything was given, in terrific vigour, that could sicken and

stun; where you positively felt the agony of the biting shells as they tore their way into the flesh, the crunching of the bones under the wheels of the artillery, the shrieks and yells of stricken men and terrified horses, the glare of relentless hate in the eyes of those who stabbed at wounded men on the ground—wounded men who, writhing in the pangs of death, had spent their last gasp of ebbing strength in a treacherous shot into the back of the foe. There it all was, a scene of fierce madness, in which men seemed to have drunk of some hell-broth and become frenzied with the cruelty of fiends. Ah! to think that that should be the last sight of mother-earth which the memories of dying men should bear away with them into the far world beyond death! To think of the souls, flung hot from this savage roar or rage straight into the eternal silence, straight before the awful judgment throne of God! And then outside, as you passed into the pleasant Cologne gardens, there sat in crowds the soldiers of Germany—the very men who had maddened in that horrible fray—quietly taking their ease in the sun, subdued and gentle; men with friendly faces and kindly eyes, strolling under the trees, and watching the merry children dance and play, surrendered to the sweet homeliness of household peace. And, as you looked at them, it seemed absolutely impossible to put the two contrasted scenes together. There was nothing in these men to suggest that it was conceivable that they actually could have ever been hotly engaged in deeds so barbarous and so bloody; that within them somewhere lay latent the fires that could blaze out in such frenzied violence, in the lust of slaughter, in the reckless ferocity of killing and being killed.[1]

II.

The Moral Value of War.

Such is war itself, as a visible fact. And all the concentrated skilfulness of science has but intensified this, its horrid aspect of hate and cruelty and hideousness. As our nerves grow ever more sensitive, and our instruments of slaughter ever more heartless and excruciating and far-reaching and wholesale, the

[1] Canon Scott Holland.

horror ever grows in intensity and in range. And then, as we recognise this, there breaks in upon us the contrast which so surprised Plato. Somehow, who can deny it?—out of this debasing and intolerable carnage there rises before us a moral character which startles us by its beauty—the character of the perfect soldier. Whence has it sprung? What strange efficacy is there in this dark soil to breed such fair flowers? We can discern a reason, perhaps, for this steadiness of will, this trained and firm nerve, this disciplined obedience; but how has there been added to them this nobility of reserve, this delicacy of honour, this courteous deference, this quiet gentleness? Even in its rougher forms, we cannot but realise the value of the character built up under the training of the barracks. We see the rawest material, which defies all other methods of education, taken up by this disciplinary system and endowed with the instincts of confederated honour, and with the brotherly heart that comes from responsibilities shared in common. This in the very roughest. And, in its finer examples, it touches the very heights of the spiritual life; it becomes typical of all that is most serene, and high-strung, and controlled, and tender; it can pass up to the very glories of Christian saintliness. We in England know that type well, for we have had it portrayed for us in its most captivating and exquisite reality by the pen of Thackeray, in the pathetic figure of Colonel Newcome. And we have its entire secret faultlessly disclosed to us in the immortal lines of our highest master-poet, "On the Character of the Happy Warrior." He—

> Who, if he be called upon to face
> Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
> Great issues, good or bad for human kind,
> Is happy as a Lover, and attired
> With sudden brightness like a Man inspired,
> And, through the heat of conflict, keeps the law
> In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw;
> Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth
> For ever, and to noble deeds give birth,
> Or he must go to dust without his fame,
> And leave a dead unprofitable name—
> Finds comfort in himself and in his cause;

This is the happy Warrior—this is He
That every Man in arms should wish to be.

If we turn to the poetic literature in which all nations have expressed their first consciousness of the ideal element in life, we find that exaltation of heroism in battle forms one of its two most prominent themes. Poetry always seeks for its object in something that has an ideal meaning, something that shows an elevation of man's spirit above his merely physical existence; still it seeks this, not by breaking away from that existence, but rather by casting a new light upon it. If it tends to liberate man's soul from the contracted cares and fears of his natural life, it is not by setting the higher against the lower, the spirit against the flesh, but rather by lifting the latter, so far as may be, to the level of the former. Poetry seeks to turn the common bread of life into sacramental food, and its water into wine. Hence it attaches itself most often to those first and simplest manifestations of man's social and individual nature in which he shows that he is something higher than an animal; it attaches itself to the love which is the natural root of all the affections of the family, and the first expression of that capacity of living for others, of which the highest Christian charity is but the purified and extended manifestation; and it attaches itself in like manner to the valour of the soldier, which, as it rises above mere animal rage and deliberately faces and overcomes the fear of death—especially if it does so not merely in defence of the honour of the individual, but of some wider interest of family or nation—seems to give evidence of a nature that is above time and change. Hence it is that the simple tale of love and battle has such undying interest for us, and seems to encircle it with a halo of imagination and romance which is seldom associated with higher and less equivocal manifestations of man's moral nature. It is as if the earliest throb of the higher life in us had in its spontaneity a kind of attractiveness which is wanting to its later, more deliberate and self-conscious manifestations.

¶ Let me in illustration take one slight incident which I find quoted from the account of Sir Charles Napier's war against the robber tribes of Northern Scinde: "A detachment of troops were marching along a valley, the cliffs overhanging which were crested by the enemy. A sergeant with eleven men chanced to

become separated from the rest by taking the wrong side of a ravine, which they expected soon to terminate, but which suddenly deepened into an impassable chasm. The officer in command signalled to the party an order to return. They mistook the signal for a command to charge; the brave fellows answered with a cheer and charged. At the summit of the steep mountain was a triangular platform, defended by a breastwork, behind which were seventy of the foe. On they went, charging up one of these fearful paths, eleven against seventy. The contest could not long be doubtful with such odds. One after another they fell; six upon the spot, the remainder hurled backwards; but not till they had slain nearly twice their own number. There is a custom, we are told, among the hillmen, that when a great chieftain of their own falls in battle his wrist is bound with a thread of red or green, the red denoting the highest rank. According to custom they stripped the dead, and threw their bodies over the precipice. When their comrades came up, they found their corpses stark and gashed; but round the wrist of every British soldier was twined the red thread of honour."[1]

III.

How are we to abolish War and preserve its Moral Value?

We can throw off the horror and wickedness of war only by releasing from out this embroilment of blood, the moral qualities, the spiritual character, which have hitherto found their meaning and discipline under the conditions of war. Those qualities are too precious and rare for society to afford to lose them. They have on them the stamp of nobility—the ideal beauty that belongs to the high excellences of obedience, of restraint, of self-sacrifice. They keep alive in us the sense of causes and of creeds for which it is a light thing to lay down our lives. They sustain that moral fibre, that fine and nervous temperament, which wealth, and ease, and the weight of crowds, and the irresolution of infinite debate, and the tumult of wordy talk, are but too apt to disannul. We cannot spare these virtues—we, least of all we English, who are so slack to recognise ideal motives, and so suspicious of all that is not practical and profitable. Yes; the world is right in its dim consciousness that, if

[1] E. Caird.

by abolishing war it dropped these moral characteristics of the happy warrior, it would pay too high a price. It would be morally retrograding. This is why the poets, who are our idealists, have so often disappointed us by the zeal with which they have sounded the trumpet for war as against industry, just because they have felt sorely the depressing conviction that an industrial era of peace meant too surely the dearth of those finer moral elements that have somehow, as yet, shone in their brightest and fairest through the smoke and heat of the battle.

We have got to make human society aware that it can secure and retain and develop, under conditions of unbroken peace, all those precious qualities which now go to make the highest type of soldierly excellence. We shall never fully succeed in that object until we make it evident to the spiritual element in us that it does not need war in order to survive; that it can, without the ugly necessity of killing and being killed, still find vent for all that is in it of chivalry and of valour, for the heroism of self-devotion, and for the splendour of courage. We must educate these very qualities themselves to shrink in disgust from the barbarism of battle, to hunger for an exercise that will be free from cruelty and hate. If the soldier-spirit itself once learned the sensitiveness which would feel the moral hideousness of the scene in which it has to display its gift, then we might hope to see the beginning of the end. Then, and then only, could we genuinely look for the day when the very implements with which we fight should be turned to happier uses; when the very temper out of which wars are bred should devote itself to the labours of peace; when the very "swords should be turned into ploughshares, and the spears into pruninghooks."

¶ I remember being deeply struck by an illustration of this truth, given in some words of Johnson, the noble-hearted missionary on Lake Nyassa, when, some years ago, he was pleading for a steamer, which at this moment is running up and down the waters of the lake carrying peace and goodwill amid villagers that once never met except to fight. He showed us how the difficulty of ending the slave trade lay in this—that the slave caravan was the only outlet for energy, the one spot of active motion that ever shook the stagnation of the blind African land. Into it, therefore, poured all that was vigorous

and alert; those who took no part in its vile work were those who had no craving to move and live and act. The material that went now to work the slave trade was the best stuff in Africa; and you could never make anything of your civilisation there unless you could divert this excellent material into some new channel, where its energy would discover a fitter outlet than it could find in the old wickedness of enslaving. Therefore it was that he needed this steamer, in order that he might offer a field for the spirit of active adventure, which might thus be drawn off and purified and redeemed.[1]

¶ In the work of covering the waste lands of vast colonies with ordered homes; in the wards of hospitals, where so much is offered to doctor and nurses that calls out the finest nerve, the steadfast resolution, the clearest self-sacrifice; in efforts spent in the task of winning to happiness and love the thousands who stagger down to degradation under the clouded misery of our foul and hideous slums;—in all these directions the way is open for high endeavour, for heroic devotion, without the stain of blood, without the curse of cruelty. Gordon found in the alleys of Woolwich work more congenial and more bracing than the long agony of the fight round Khartoum.[2]

Christianity introduced mankind to a new kind of courage; the courage which is shown, not in resisting or gaining the victory over enemies, but in a love that refused to count any man an enemy, and that sought to conquer by patient endurance of every wrong, and even of death itself. For this new spirit the highest honour possible to man was not the prize of victory in battle, but the crown of martyrdom. This type of fortitude was for a time so exclusively honoured, that by many Christians the life of a soldier, even of one who fought for the best of causes, was regarded as profane and unholy. "How," asks Tertullian, "shall Christians go to war whom Christ has disarmed? In taking the sword from St. Peter, Christ has disarmed all soldiers."

¶ In the year 1746, the Jacobites, or adherents of the Stuarts, inspired by the charming personality of the Young Pretender, made a determined attempt to defeat the Royalists, but were unsuccessful. A conflict which had lasted half a century was brought to an end on the battlefield of Culloden; for Parliament immediately took steps to break the power of the Highland chiefs and the clan system, by abolishing their authority, and parcelling

[1] Canon Scott Holland. [2] *Ibid.*

out their lands among the officers and favourites of the victorious Royalist cause. Disappointed but undaunted, some of the chiefs, accompanied by members of their clans, emigrated to Canada, arrived in the province now known as Nova Scotia, and founded the county of Picton. Here they were inspired by two men of great mind and heart, Dr. MacGregor, a member of the famous fighting clan of MacGregor, and Dr. M'Culloch, the former the greatest minister Nova Scotia has seen, the latter, its greatest educationist. Mainly through the efforts of these leaders, who had seen God, and had had their minds trained in His school, the Highland chiefs and their followers proceeded to make use of those same qualities which they had in the old land manifested in their determined fighting, in the cause of agriculture, education, and religion. The church, the school, and the home became the three greatest institutions in the new land, and have had that place till now. To-day, the descendants of these men, who still delight in the name "Scotchman," are prouder by far of their habits of industry, their high intelligence, their Christian principle, than they ever were of their fighting. The instruments of war have been converted into weapons of peace, and Canada stands as the glorious result.

¶ I saw a picture the other day which was intended to represent the re-enshrinement of peace. A cannon had dropped from its battered carriage and was lying in the meadow, rusting away to ruin. A lamb was feeding at its very mouth, and round it on every side the flowers were growing. But really that is not a picture of the Golden Age. The cannon is not to rust; it is to be converted, its strength is to be transfigured. After the Franco-German war many of the cannon balls were remade into Church bells. One of our manufacturers in Birmingham told me only a week or two ago, that he was busy turning the empty cases of the shells used in the recent war into dinner-gongs.[1]

IV.

Transformation.

The nations do not fling away their weapons, nor do they destroy them; they transform them, by beating them into pruninghooks. For every weapon of war there will be a use, even in the era of peace. The swords will not be shivered, they will be turned into ploughshares; the spears will not be snapped, they will be fashioned into pruninghooks. The instruments

[1] J. H. Jowett.

which desolated the world, and filled it with blood and horror, are not to disappear; they are to be turned into instruments which will make it fair and fruitful—a very house of God and gate of heaven. It is not enough that men learn war no more, they must go on to learn the higher arts of peace. The ideal life or society does not consist in negations; it deals with its material in a constructive and transforming spirit. It delights to see the pruninghook in the spear, and it hastens to transform the one into the other.

A great and far-reaching principle this! Nothing need be lost; all things may be transformed. The powers and energies which were dedicated to the cause of evil, if only they be touched and consecrated by a new sense of the meaning of life, will be equally mighty when thrown upon the side of God and good. Paul, the tireless persecutor of the Christians, becomes the great missionary to the Gentiles.

When the Lord laid hold of Zacchæus, He did not destroy his shrewdness and despoil him of his foresight and enterprise. The redeemed Zacchæus was just as shrewd as the unredeemed Zacchæus, but the shrewdness had been transformed. It was no longer a poisoned sword; it had become a ploughshare used in the general welfare of the race. When the Lord laid hold of Hugh Latimer did He draw away the power of his wit? Nay, the redeemed Hugh Latimer was just as witty, just as humorous as Hugh Latimer unredeemed, only the wit had been transformed. It was no longer a sword, but a ploughshare; no longer turning with destructive energy upon his own soul, but used in the ministry of purity, and as the happy servant of righteousness and truth.

¶ One of the Greek philosophers wrote: "And this is the greatest stroke of art, to turn an evil into a good." Such is the grand mission of the faith of Jesus Christ. It is the work of the devil to debase good things to vile uses; it is the task of the Spirit of grace to make of evil things vessels unto honour, fit for the Master's use. The other day we heard of a shell found on the battlefields of South Africa being converted into the bell of a church, as the brazen serpent was lifted up to save those who were dying of the bite of venomous serpents; and in many ways things, institutions, and methods which for ages have tormented and destroyed society are being transformed into instruments of blessing.[1]

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

The Making of a Missionary

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The Making of a Missionary.

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I send me.—vi. 1–8.

This chapter is one of the most important in the history of revelation. Like a picture of wonderful beauty and subtle suggestion, it will repay repeated and careful study. The great words of the chapter are heard and spoken in vision, but they cannot be called visionary in any shallow sense; they are intensely practical, they contain the prophet's call, they give the keynote of his life, and sum up in a few striking sentences the spirit and purpose of his ministry. The vision shows us how Isaiah became a prophet, and gives the secret of his strong, consistent career in the words, "Mine eyes have seen the King."

The passage is particularly rich in material for the expositor and the preacher. Although it will be taken here as a single great text, there is enough for a sermon in every verse of it, enough sometimes in a part of a verse. It has received many titles. The most popular title is, "The Making of a Prophet." Perhaps that title should be enlarged now into "The Making of a Missionary," letting it be understood, how-

ever, that the word "missionary" means anyone who is sent to do any work for God.

The passage is easily and almost inevitably divided into three parts—

1. A Vision of God, verses 1–4.
2. A Vision of Self, verses 5–7.
3. A Vision of Duty, verse 8.

I.

A Vision of God.

There is an essential difference between the prophets of early times and the writing prophets. That difference is that the latter are conscious of an express *call*, at a definite moment, by Jehovah to their office. We have not an actual account of this in the case of all of them, but its preciseness in the case of five justifies our assuming that from the time of Amos onwards a similar call was experienced by all true prophets of Jehovah. The call to be a prophet surprised Amos in the midst of occupations of a wholly different kind—Jehovah took him from the herd. According to Hos. i. 2 the commencement of Hosea's prophetic ministry was contemporaneous with his recognition that Jehovah intended even the prophet's unhappy experiences in his married life to be a reflection of Israel's relation to Himself. Isaiah records a vision that he had in the year King Uzziah died, when the Divine commission was given him to drive the people by his message into ever-increasing obduracy. Attempts have been made to explain this vision—the only one in Isaiah—as simply the literary garb invented for inward reflections and conflicts, so that the prophet's own determination would take the place of an express Divine call. But all such attempts are shattered by the earnest terms of the narrative, which will not permit us to think but of a real occurrence. The very same is the impression we receive from Jeremiah's record of his call in the thirteenth year of Josiah. Quite remarkable there is the emphasis laid (i. 5) on the choice and consecration of Jeremiah to the prophetic office even before his birth. How could anyone invent a thing of this

kind and proclaim it as a word addressed to him by God? But as little could he have added the supplementary invention that he tried to evade the Divine commission (v. 7) by pleading want of skill in speaking, and youth. On the contrary, we must see here an experience the prophet once had which left an ineffaceable impression upon his memory. In the case of Ezekiel, his exact dating of his first vision (i. 1, 2) by year, month, and day is the pledge that he, too, is conscious that his call to be a prophet (ii. 3 ff.) was a definite occurrence.[1]

¶ The *normal* mode, says Whitehouse, by which Christian ministers and statesmen have been led to realise their vocation constitutes the most interesting point in their life-story, because it is the *turning*-point. Among Christian statesmen we would instance the Englishman John Bright and the American Senator Sumner. The case of John Bright is not without its partial parallel to that of Hosea. That of Senator Sumner has been portrayed in Whittier's immortal verses, beginning—

> No trumpet sounded in his ear,
> He saw not Sinai's cloud and flame;
> But never yet to Hebrew seer
> A clearer voice of duty came.

i. *The Occasion of the Vision.*

"In the year that King Uzziah died."

There is more than a date given here; there is a great contrast suggested. Prophecy does not chronicle by time, but by experiences, and we have here, as it seems, the cardinal experience of a prophet's life.

1. *Uzziah.*—Of all the kings of Israel none had done so much for the nation as King Uzziah, save only David. Solomon's greatness was largely inherited. He certainly stands a figure more splendid than Uzziah, but not of as great service. Coming to the throne when a lad of sixteen, for more than fifty years Uzziah reigned in Jerusalem wisely and well. Under the guidance of one Zechariah, of whom all we know is this, that he "had understanding in the vision of God," the youth Uzziah sought the Lord, and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. He drove back the Philistines and many

[1] E. Kautzsch, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, v. p. 672*b*.

another tribe that had encroached upon Israel's domain, so that his name was spread abroad even to Egypt. At home he was always busy seeing after the welfare of his people. He strengthened Jerusalem with fortified towers, and set up towers for the protection of those in the pastures and plains. Careful about the water supply, he digged many wells. He had husbandmen busied with cattle; and planted vines on the mountain slopes. "He loved husbandry," we read,—an honest and healthy love that it were well if we could all encourage and exercise. He turned to account the inventions of cunning men. Altogether a man whose name spread far abroad, associated with all that was beneficent and prosperous: "he was marvellously helped," we are told, "till he was strong."

But—ah, there comes this black and dreadful "but"—*But when he was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction.* There came a day—probably some day of high festival, when he made a feast to the lords and chief captains; and the power of the wine, and the power of a yet more intoxicating flattery, prompted him to a deed that was his ruin. Arrayed in all his splendour the king comes to the Temple and demands in his haughty pride to usurp the authority of the priest, and to burn incense on the altar. The priests, those of them that were valiant men, rose up, and stayed the intruder, king though he was. For a moment Uzziah stood face to face with the priests, the golden censer in his hand, furious at their opposition. Would they lift their hand against the king, and such a king as he? Then suddenly the rage resulted, as it is believed to have done in other cases, in the manifestation of leprosy. Suddenly on that face, flushed in its anger, under the royal crown, spread the ghastly whiteness. He felt that God had smitten him. A king no more; one from whom all men shrank—he went forth from the palace and throne and court. And all the nation spake of him with bated breath, suppressing the very name, "*He is a leper.*"

2. *Isaiah.*—Isaiah seems to have spent the whole, or the greater part, of his life in the city of Jerusalem; for many years he was the most remarkable figure, and sometimes the most influential man, in that city. The tribes of Israel had again been broken into discordant division, and Jerusalem was at that time the centre of only a small kingdom; but this man and his

band of disciples set at work spiritual influences of greater significance for the higher life of the world. Though the Jerusalem of his day was full of feebleness, folly, and wickedness, we can trace in his teaching the beginnings of a new Jerusalem, Zion, the city of the Great King, which shall not pass away. He was a young man when he saw the vision; as he stood at the opening of his great career he was led to look into the heart of things, and to see the real meaning of his life. Probably it was later in his life when he wrote down this statement for the use of his disciples and the service of the Church. Before he committed it to the care of men who loved him and who would cherish his memory, he had often pondered its meaning and proved its power. He remembered that the decisive moment of his life came in the year of King Uzziah's death. When the proud, successful king had been brought low by disease, and had passed under the shadow of death, the young patriot was called to see the spiritual temple and the Eternal King. Life is full of change; high rank and worldly success cannot resist the attack of decay and death; how important, then, for the young man to learn that there is an unchanging kingdom, and a King supreme in majesty and righteousness.

Read the memoirs of Isaiah, and you will see how intense and intimate was the part he played in the life and movement of his age. One day you will find him at the Temple, scathing with scornful reprobation the hypocrisy and hollowness of the established ritual of religion. Another time he has taken his stand over against the fashionable promenade of Jerusalem, and as he watches the passing procession of pomp and opulence, built up on the misery and degradation of defenceless poverty, his heart grows hot with honest indignation, and he breaks into impassioned invective against the stream of selfish luxury, as it rolls by with a smiling face and a cruel heart. Again, he forces his way into a meeting of the Privy Council, fearlessly confronts the king and his advisers, denounces the iniquity of a faithless foreign policy, and sternly demands its abandonment. In every department of national life, in every section of social and religious existence, his voice was heard and his personality felt. Yet nobody ever mistook him for a mere politician, philanthropist, or reformer. He was ever, and was ever felt to be, a prophet.

3. It was *in the year that King Uzziah died* that this strange sight was seen by this inhabitant of Jerusalem. Most probably it was soon after the king died, perhaps immediately after. For though, in the general heading of the prophecies, Isaiah is said to have prophesied in the days of Uzziah, that heading is not to be pressed so far as to make it assert that he had actually prophesied in the lifetime of Uzziah; what is meant is that his prophetic ministry extended all through the reign of Jotham, even from the very year that King Uzziah died. This inaugural vision and prophecy was given so near the death of Uzziah that it might be said to be in the days of that renowned king. Perhaps it was given immediately after his death; it might be when, though dead, he had not yet been laid in the grave. It was a vision that might well have been suggested by such a momentous death, the death of one once a king, and one so powerful, holding such a place among the forces of society, bridling them with so firm a hand, a hand now relaxed, leaving the unquiet humours of the land to assert themselves, and draw the State on to its destruction.

We might even fancy, without unduly stretching fancy, that Isaiah, who, though not yet a prophet, appears to have been a citizen of high rank, and perhaps familiar at the court, had this vision presented to him a little after he had come out of the royal chamber where the deceased monarch lay in state. Perhaps he had been permitted to enter along with the common crowd of subjects, who pressed in to render their last act of homage; and though he had seemed to walk round the bier, and linger a moment to look upon the still face, as mechanically as any of them, it was with very different thoughts in his heart. It was a dead king that lay before him. And though the presence of death in any form might have suggested the first half of the vision—the unseen world within this world—only the sight of a dead king could have led Isaiah's mind to draw that comprehensive sketch of the history and the destiny of his nation with which the chapter ends. Those eternal, changeless sights are reflected in the face, rapt but unmoved; the grandeur, the unchanging flow of eternity, the awful face of God, holding the mind in an absorbed stillness, so that emotion ebbs and flows no more in the heart, and no more plays upon the countenance, but all is still.

Now when the prophet came out from the presence of the dead, musing on all things as he must have mused, and probably entering the Temple where the service of God was going on—for the vision is just the reflection of the service of God in His house upon earth, it is only this service translated into its real meaning—it is not unnatural that such a vision as this should have presented itself before him. Such a sight is well fitted to bring before our minds the same great scene. For there is such an eternal scene behind the changing forms of the present life; a scene not future but present, though the perfect realising of it be, to most of us, future; a world within this world, or behind it, of which we only catch glimpses sometimes through the occurrences of this life—a world such as the prophet saw, God the King on His throne, surrounded by beings all alive to His glory, serving Him continually in the greatness of their might. There is such a world within this world, of which this world is but the veil and covering; and we begin to understand this world, and see any order and meaning in it, only when this other, which is the inner side of it, is revealed to our sight.

¶ A king must die! There seems to be something almost incongruous in the very phrase. The very word "king" means power. The king is the man who *can*, the man who is possessed of ability, dominion, sovereignty; and the shock is almost violent when we are told that the range of the kingship is shaped and determined by death. We could all understand how death might limit the years and conquests of Lazarus, shivering outside the palace gates, weary, hungry, and "full of sores," but it is more difficult to understand how death can enter the palace, and set a barrier to the life of Dives, "clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day"; but "it came to pass that the beggar died," and "the rich man also died, and was buried." A little while ago I took up the death-roll at a workhouse, and glanced through the chronological lists of paupers: Elizabeth So-and-so, died so-and-so. Then I took up a volume of English history, looked at the death-roll of monarchs, the chronological list of kings and queens: Queen Elizabeth, died so-and-so. I found that the one word described the end of both pauper and king—"the beggar *died*," "William the Conqueror *died*," "King Uzziah *died*." How the one word suffices for all sorts and conditions of men![1]

[1] J. H. Jowett.

4. God never empties places in our homes and hearts, or in the nation or the Church, without being ready to fill them. He sometimes empties them that He may fill them. Sorrow and loss are meant to prepare us for the vision of God, and their effect should be to purge the inward eye, that it may see Him. When the leaves drop from the forest trees we can see the blue sky which their dense abundance hid. Well for us if the passing of all that can pass drives us to Him who cannot pass, if the unchanging God stands out more clear, more near, more dear, because of change.

This accounts for a great many of the dark experiences in life. God puts out our little light that we may see Him the better. When you are looking out of the window at night, gazing towards the sky, you will see the stars more clearly if you put out your gaslight. That is what God has to do for us. He has to put out the secondary lights in order that we may see the eternal light. Uzziah has to die, in order that we may see it is God who lives. God has continually to take away our little kings, the weak repositories of our trust, in order to show that we have given a false emphasis to life. He takes away that which we regarded as the keystone, in order to reveal to us the real binding-force in life. I have known Him come to a nation and take away the King of Commercial Prosperity, because when commercial prosperity reigns men are too prone to forget the Lord. It is not in the seven fat years that we pray. It is in the seven years of famine, when the wheat is "blasted with the east wind." It is then that men see the Lord and pray.

¶ I know a little cottage which is surrounded by great and stately trees, clothed with dense and massy foliage. In the summer days and through all the sunny season, it just nestles in this circle of green, and has no vision of the world beyond. But the winter comes, so cold and keen. It brings its sharp knife of frost, cuts off the leaves, until they fall trembling to the ground. There is nothing left but the bare framework on which summer hung her beauteous growths. Poor little cottage, with the foliage all gone! But is there no compensation? Yes, yes. Standing in the cottage in the winter time and looking out of the window, you can see a mansion, which has come into view through the openings left by the fallen leaves. The winter brought the vision of the mansion![1]

[1] J. H. Jowett.

5. Human purpose never has so definite and intelligible an aspect as when it flashes first in sudden intuition on the mind. The main end fills the vision; the essential significance absorbs the attention; all the thousand contingencies which will obscure that end and compromise that significance are as yet unsuspected. Everything is clear, clear-cut, and coercive. But with the years comes also a cleansing of the spiritual vision; and the intuitions of youth, seen in the retrospect, are seen more justly. The correspondence of the earlier and the later visions brings the verification of their quality. If the man, wise with the bitter wisdom of failure and conflict, hears still the Voice which thrilled the unshadowed heart of the boy, that Voice needs no better authentication of origin. For inspiration or for the "great refusal" *then*, for acquittal or for condemnation *now*, it was, and is, the Voice of God. All the years are bound by it into a single experience.

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
Long ago, but all too low,
So that scarce a care it stirred
If the voice were real or no;
I heard it in my youth when first
The waters of my life outburst;
But, now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
That voice, still low, but fatal clear.

¶ The definiteness of the prophet's memory is startling,—in the death-year of King Uzziah. Happy the man who keeps a journal and records the date of this and that event. I know one who is able to say, "It was on the 19th of March, 1886, I began to be led by the Spirit." But others there are who must say, "I do not know just when I entered the new life. I think it was some time between sixteen and twenty years of age. The change came so gradually that I glided into the consciousness of a definite relationship to God as a ship glides out of a region of ice into a warmer zone."[1]

6. It is in hours like this that men get real glimpses of God. It is always when some Uzziah has piled up his successes until in their very definiteness men wake up to their shortcoming in the presence of the needs of the hour, that we feel the Infinite

[1] C. C. Albertson.

near, and at last see His skirts filling all the vacancies of life. Never until we know how much, do we know how little, man can do. Never until we see the best that humanity achieves do we know how grave are the problems which are born beneath our very success, which demand an infinite factor for their solution. In the death-hour of Uzziah, when under the mighty hands of the Medici, Florence had been growing luxurious and beautiful, when gems flashed from her proud neck and marble palaces were her play-things, when copious rivers of revenue poured in upon the Duke and the throne, and literature and art were in sight of their long-delayed laurels, yea—in the death-hour of their Uzziah when Lorenzo had fallen, Girolamo Savonarola, the Isaiah of that Jerusalem, saw amidst and above the terrible problems which his reign had made, and which surrounded him, the vision of the Almighty God. In the death-hour of Uzziah, when the arms of freedom had begun to shine with glorious victory, when the hand of rebellion had been pushed away from the white throat of liberty, when the whole race was ready to drown the dreadful clanking of eighty years of chains in one glad song of freedom, when a restored Union lifted up her head above the heat and dust of war, in the death-year of Uzziah, when Lincoln fell, yonder at New York another whose sword was like the tongue of Isaiah, seeing the problem which survived the assassin's bullet, saw midst and above them the vision of God; "Fellow-citizens," said Garfield on that occasion, "God reigns, and the Government at Washington still lives."[1]

ii. *The Vision.*

"I saw the Lord."

1. The prophet had lost a hero and found his Lord. "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord." He had anticipated that when the good King Uzziah died the linch-pin would be removed, and the car of the nation's life would topple over into confusion and disaster. All Isaiah's hopes were centred in this radical and aggressively righteous monarch, and he feared for the State when its monarch should be taken. He

[1] F. W. Gunsaulus.

anticipated chaos, and lo! in place of chaos there emerged the Lord of Order! He found that in the days of his hero-worship he had been living in comparative twilight, the real Luminary had been partially obscured, there had been an eclipse of the Sun: and now, with the passing of Uzziah the eclipse had ended, and the Presence of the Lord blazed out in unexpected glory! "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord." It had seemed to the foreboding fears of the depressed youth as though the very existence of the kingdom were involved in the continued reign of the king. If he goes—what then? A crisis was assured! And yet in place of the crisis came God, and the effulgent glory was bewildering. Succeeding generations of men have shared these pessimistic fears. We have riveted our gaze upon the incidental until the incidental has become the essential, and we have feared the withering blast of death. "What will Israel do when Uzziah is taken?" "What will Methodism do when John Wesley is removed?" "What will the Salvation Army do when anything happens to its General?" "What will this or that church do when bereft of its minister?" And the long-feared crisis has come, but instead of being left to the hopeless, clammy darkness of the grave, we have gazed upon the dazzling glories of a forgotten heaven! The transient pomp and splendour died, and their passing removed the veil from the face of the eternal, and we saw the Lord. "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord." He anticipated an end, he found a new beginning.

¶ Last autumn I spent a little time in the old castle at Stirling, and in one of the rooms of the tower were two curiosities which riveted my attention. In one corner of the room was an old time-worn pulpit. It was John Knox's pulpit, the pulpit from which he used to proclaim so faithfully the message of the King. In the opposite corner were a few long spears, much corrupted by rust, found on the field of Bannockburn, which lies just beyond the castle walls. John Knox's pulpit on the one hand, the spears of Bannockburn on the other! One the type of material forces, forces of earth and time; the other the type of spiritual forces, forces of eternity and heaven. The spears, representative of King Uzziah; the pulpit, representative of the Lord. Which symbolises the eternal? The force and influence which radiated from that pulpit will enrich and fashion Scottish character when Bannockburn has become an uninfluential memory, standing vague and

indefinite, on the horizon of a far-distant time. When King Uzziah is dead, the Lord will still live, high and lifted up.[1]

2. The great characteristic of Isaiah's age was religious indifference. That which the prophet was enabled to see—that great Divine world within this outer world—was the very thing which the nation could not be made to perceive. Men could not be impressed with the idea of a living God, a Sovereign high and lifted up, ruling over the world and life and men's consciences. They were insensible to this, and would have none of it. "The heart of the people was fat, and their ears heavy, and their eyes closed." They were incapable of being touched with the feeling of the reality of God. And this insensibility led to disobedience, to formalism, to distrust of Jehovah, and to schemes of worldly policy; and, when danger threatened, to the calling in of foreign help: "they stayed themselves on Egypt, they trusted in Assyria"; and when these great world-powers once planted their foot on the little country the end of it was not far distant —as described in the closing verses of the chapter.

Perhaps the death of Uzziah suggested some of this to the prophet, and made him think of it, and follow it out in his mind to its conclusion. But it was the sight of Jehovah that made him understand it on its deeper side. It was the revelation to him of a great Ruler behind all things, and a hidden glory—the real power within all things,—a fire in contact with the sin and impurity of mankind, that must consume them or cleanse it. It was this that made him feel the real meaning of the circumstances of his time in their relation to this Ruler and made him, when he himself had been brought into right relation to Him, take a stand in regard to the world, and assume his right place in it.

¶ It is singular how little place we take in the world, how little we feel it needful to take any place; how we are like mere grains of sand, the sport of the wind, each one of us without inherent force, not taking a place, but rolled into a place by the forces about us, or by the mere dead weight of gravity—pushed into a profession by the example of our companions, or the advice of friends, or, it may be, because we think we should like something in it, but without taking a broad view of it, especially without taking a moral estimate of it as a force which we might wield for

[1] J. H. Jowett.

higher ends, and setting it clearly before us as one of other great forces that should all combine, and realising it in its relation to the world and the state of society as a whole,—how slow we are to feel that we have any responsibilities in regard to the condition of things.[1]

3. *I saw.*—In a very deep and true sense it is what a man sees that either makes or unmakes him. The effect of vision upon character and service is transforming. It elevates or debases, according to its quality. Whether a man grovels or soars, whether he slimes his way with the worm or walks upon the hill-tops, whether he remains in the realm of animalism or rises into the spiritual, and lives in the high places of the sons of God, is determined by his seeing. The men who shape history and direct the destinies of nations are the men who have eyes.

¶ Moses saw the invisible, and endured, struggled, conquered, lifted himself and his people into prominence for evermore. Saul of Tarsus, on the Damascus road, saw Jesus Christ, and out of that vision came a power of manhood that has thrown itself beneficently across twenty centuries. Luther, in his monk's cell, had a vision of the spiritual, and out of it came the Protestant Reformation, with all its forces of liberty and progress and enterprise. General Booth's tremendous success with the Salvation Army, an organisation which in less than a generation has belted the globe, is simply the realisation of what he saw. Because David Livingstone had eyes to see, Africa to-day is zoned with light, and that matchless career of his stands out before the world, and will ever stand, as an inspiration to the noblest efforts for human uplifting. Because Jesus saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven, He was thrilled by a sublime optimism, because He saw, as no one else has ever seen, His kingdom is coming, and will yet cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.[2]

Isaiah says, "I saw." Is it, then, given to a man to be so sure of spiritual phenomena? So it seems from this Book. The basis of this confidence is in the spiritual consciousness out of which Moses spoke when he said, "I saw the passing pageant of the goodness of the Lord"; out of which Paul spoke when he said, "I saw a light above the brightness of the sun, and heard a voice out of the radiance calling me by name"; out of which John spoke when he said, "In the midst of the golden candlesticks I saw One like unto the Son of Man, girt with a golden girdle,

[1] A. B. Davidson. [2] R. F. Coyle.

and holding the seven stars in his hand." Not more real was the mountain whereon Moses stood, or the splendid highway over which Paul was travelling, or the rocks of Patmos whereon the waves broke into spray,—not more real were these than the visions unfolded to human spirits there.

¶ All men who do really great work for the world have some touch of this Divine faculty and vision. Even the man of science, is, at his best, a seer and a poet; for it is not only observation and reflection, but imagination also, which enable him to see the real behind the phenomenal, to look quite through the shows of things, and to gaze on an universe utterly unlike this visible universe, a world in which a few great forces, in obedience to a few great laws, robe themselves in an infinite variety of forms. Under the drifting and confused play of events the historian, again, if he be worthy of his name, discerns an increasing purpose, a secret law, a Divine order, a growing harmony. Even the statesman is great only as he too can look through the welter of passing events, and see what are the ruling forces and principles at work beneath the surface of national life, and how he may avail himself of these for the general good.[1]

4. *The Lord.*—Let me remind you of that apparently audacious commentary upon this great vision which the Evangelist John gives us: "These things said Esaias, when he had beheld *his* glory and spake of *him.*" Then the Christ is the manifest Jehovah; is the King of Glory. Then the vision which was but a transitory revelation is the revelation of an eternal reality, and "the vision splendid" does not "fade but brightens, into the light of common day"; when instead of being flashed only on the inward eye of a prophet, it is made flesh and walks amongst us, and lives our lives, and dies our death. Our eyes have seen the King in as true a reality, and in better fashion, than ever Isaiah did amid the sanctities of the Temple. And the eyes that have seen only the near foreground, the cultivated valleys, and the homes of men, are raised, and lo! the long line of glittering peaks, calm, silent, pure. Who will look at the valleys when the Himalayas stand out, and the veil is drawn aside?

¶ To see "also the Lord" is alike the secret of steadfastness, and the guarantee of that knowledge in the midst of perplexity which alone liberates from fretful anxiety and unbelief, and leads to right choice and wise action. And to those who seek Him, He is

[1] S. Cox, in *The Expositor*, 2nd Ser., ii. p. 25.

always so revealing Himself, in character varying according to their present need, and always as their entire sufficiency. Some men can see only "the things which are temporal," and are hence distracted; but others have learned to look at "the things which are eternal," and are in consequence being continually attracted to Him in whom they find the perfection of wisdom and strength and love.

Two men looked through prison bars,
The one saw mud—the other stars.

iii. *The Throne.*

"Sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up."

1. The scene which Isaiah beholds is the heavenly palace of Jehovah's sovereignty, modelled upon, but not a copy of, His earthly Temple at Jerusalem: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." The comparatively small adyton of the Temple on Zion is indefinitely expanded, the lofty throne takes the place of the mercy-seat, the skirts of the royal mantle, falling in ample folds, fill the space about and below the throne, and conceal from the beholder, standing beneath, the unapproachable Form seated upon it. The two colossal cherubim, whose extended wings overshadowed the ark in the Holy of holies, are absent, and there appears instead a choir of living creatures, encircling the throne: "Seraphim stood above Him: each had six wings; with twain He covered His face, and with twain He covered His feet, and with twain He did fly."

¶ Some of you may have been watching a near and beautiful landscape in the land of mountains and eternal snows, till you have been exhausted by its very richness, and till the distant hills which bounded it have seemed, you knew not why, to limit and contract the view, and then a veil has been withdrawn, and new hills not looking as if they belonged to this earth, yet giving another character to all that does belong to it, have unfolded themselves before you. This is an imperfect, very imperfect, likeness (yet it is one) of that revelation which must have been made to the inner eye of the prophet, when he saw another throne than the throne of the house of David, another king than Uzziah or Jotham, another train than that of priests or minstrels in the Temple, other winged forms than those golden ones which over-

shadowed the mercy-seat. Each object was the counterpart of one that was then or had been at some time before his bodily eyes; yet it did not borrow its shape or colour from those visible things. They evidently derived their substance and radiance from those which were invisible. Separated from them they could impart no lustre; for they had none. The kings of the house of David reigned because that king was reigning whom God had set upon His holy hill of Zion; because He lived on, when they dropped one and another into their graves; because in Him dwelt the light and the power by which each might illumine his own darkness, sustain his own weakness. The symbols and services of the Temple were not, as priests and people often thought, an earthly machinery for scaling a distant Heaven; they were witnesses of a Heaven nigh at hand, of a God dwelling in the midst of His people, of His being surrounded by spirits which do His pleasure hearkening to the voice of His words.[1]

What was Uzziah in all his greatness now as the Lord sat upon His throne *high and lifted up*? Here were the shifting scenes of human life—the shadows that come and go, the pageants that move to the silence and rest of the grave. *There high and lifted up*—above all time, above all change—was the Eternal. Uzziah the king, Uzziah the leper, Uzziah the corpse—to set the heart upon him was to be disappointed, deserted, desolate. *The Lord is king*—that is the centre of all things, the true home and refuge of the soul. Here is some ground for our trust; here all the adoration of the soul finds fitting room and sphere, and worthy rank for its service and worship.

¶ The Lord is always upon a throne, even when He is nailed to the Cross; this Lord and His throne are inseparable. There are dignitaries that have to study how to keep their thrones, but the Lord and His throne are one.[2]

2. But what shall we say when we recall Him of whom the evangelist asserts "Isaiah saw *his* glory, and spoke of *him*"? *High and lifted up*, verily! But how all unlike that which Isaiah saw. Bound and beaten and buffeted, scourged and mocked, amidst a band of ribald soldiers and ruffians who smite Him and pluck the hairs off His cheek. Condemned alike by Jewish priest and Roman judge He goes forth to be crucified.

[1] F. D. Maurice, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 221.
[2] J. Parker, *The People's Bible*, xiv. p. 283.

There in all shame and agony He hangs stricken and smitten. Surely, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

iv. *The Train.*

"And his train filled the temple."

1. It was not only that Isaiah had an unexpected vision of God, it was the unique character of the vision which impressed and empowered him. Where does the wonder of the prophet culminate? "I saw the Lord, *sitting upon a throne*!" That was not the unfamiliar sight, and not there did the prophet's wonder gather. "*High and lifted up!*" A terrible sublimity, like some towering and awe-inspiring Alpine height! Yet not there was concentrated the supreme surprise. "*And his train filled the temple!*" That was the marvel which made the prophet's heart stand still. He was not a stranger to the conception of the throne, or of the lonely and snow-white exaltation, but this vision of the train that "filled the temple" was altogether foreign to his thought. You will remember that in all these Temple arrangements of the olden days there were different grades and varying degrees of sanctity. Even in the time of our Lord there were divisions, separating the holy and the profane, beginning at the outer courts, where the foot of the Gentile might tread, but beyond which he was not permitted to pass, on penalty of death, on to the veiled and silent chamber where the awful Presence dwelt between the cherubim. And there was the same gradient in the thought of the young Isaiah. There were divisions in his temple, separating the different degrees of sanctity, ranging from the much-diluted holiness of the remote circumference to the clear and quenchless flame of the sacred Presence. And now comes this strange and all-convulsing vision: "His train *filled* the temple," filled it, every section of it, every corner of it, to the furthest and outermost wall. "The posts of the thresholds," not merely the curtains of the inner shrine, "the posts of the thresholds moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was *filled* with smoke." That is the word which expresses the supreme wonder of this great inaugural vision. "His train *filled*

the temple!" "The house was *filled* with smoke." The garments of the Almighty swept an unsuspected area, His robe impartially carpeted the entire pile, there was not a single inch that was exempt from the touch of His enveloping Presence. "His train filled the temple." What, then, had the crisis brought to the young hero-worshipper who had been so fearful of the passing of his noble king? It had brought to him a larger conception of God, a filling-out conception of God, a full-tide conception, filling every nook and creek and bay in the manifold and far-stretching shore of human life.[1]

> No face: only the sight
> Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
> With a hem that I could recognise.[2]

2. The most important crises in a man's life are related to the growth or impoverishment of his conception of God. It is momentous when some area in the wide circle of his life is unexpectedly discovered to be the dwelling-place of God. Robinson Crusoe begins to track his desolate and presumably uninhabited island, and one day, on the sandy shore, comes upon the print of a human foot. That footprint revolutionises his entire conception of the island, and all his plans and expedients are transfigured. And so the soul, moving over some area of its activities which has never been related to God, and over which God has never been assumed to exercise a living and immediate authority, one day unexpectedly discovers His footprints upon this particular tract of the sands of time, and the whole of the spiritual outlook is transformed. "Surely the Lord is in *this* place, and I knew it not."

¶ If thus His train fills the temple, the great temple in which He ever dwells, then how easy for us to touch the hem of His garment and be made whole of whatever plague of soreness we may suffer from.

> God's children cannot wander beyond reach
> Of the sweep of His white raiment. Touch and hold!
> And if you weep, still weep where John was laid
> While Jesus loved him.

3. There is a division which is made, not merely by the

[1] J. H. Jowett, in *The Examiner*, March 15, 1906.
[2] Browning, *Christmas Eve*.

thoughtless and flippant, but even by many grave and serious minds. On one side the barrier they move softly and reverently, as though feeling the very breathings of the Almighty Presence: on the other side they step loudly and thoughtlessly, as though the Almighty were absent. And then one day there comes one of the great crises of life, and on the secular side of the barrier they see the trailing garments of the Lord, and they are filled with a surprise which ends in resurrection. For it *is* a birthday for the soul when we discover that the Lord occupies the whole of this divided house, and that His train fills the temple.

(1) I have frequently heard reference to my own vocation as a "sacred calling," says Mr. Jowett, but I have rarely, if ever, heard the same sober phrase applied to the work of the baker or tent-maker, or even to the work of the city councillor or the members of the House of Commons. But the seamless robe of the Lord is on both sides the artificial barrier, and all things on either side can be equally sacred and sanctified.

(2) Another temple which our modern thought frequently divides into sections of different degrees of sanctity is the temple of the entire personality. One side of the barrier is called body, and the other is called spirit. It is a great day for a man when the wonderful revelation breaks upon his eyes, that these two entities possess a common sanctity, that our division is unwise and impoverishing, and that His train fills the whole temple. In the olden days there was a school of thinkers who regarded matter as essentially evil, the very sphere and dwelling-place of evil, and, therefore, the body itself was esteemed as the very province of the devil. It was therefore further reasoned that to despise the body was to heap shame and contumely upon the devil, and that one of the holiest exercises was thus to treat the flesh with disdain and contempt. The body was a thing of the gutter, — gutter-born, and destined to a gutter death! Therefore they neglected it, they bruised it, they refused to cleanse it, and they utterly deprived it of any attention and adornment. So far as the body part of the temple was concerned, the Lord was not in it! Now we can see the force and relevancy of the Apostle's firm and vigorous teaching: "Know ye not that your *body* is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" That word would come as a bewildering surprise! The Lord's temple

does not end where the spirit ends; it includes the body too: and His train fills the temple! "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." *That* veil in the temple has been rent in twain!

(3) There is still another temple which we divide into discriminating sections much as the Temple of old was divided. One side of the barrier is described as home, the other side as foreign, the one side as Jew, the other side as Gentile. And so the temple itself, rather than the partitioning veil, is too frequently rent in twain. It is a season of wonderful regeneration when first the train of the Almighty is seen to fill the entire temple, and the whole of the unworthily divided area is seen to be the familiar walking-ground of the Eternal God. To go out, I say, into the section regarded as foreign, and to behold the footprints of the Lord, to see that, even where home ends, the trailing garment of the Lord sweeps on, is a great birthday for the soul, a day of fertilising knowledge and of energising grace! To gaze upon other sects, foreign to our own, and to see common footprints in the varying roads; to gaze upon other nations, foreign to our own, and to see the mystic garment in their unfamiliar ways, to discover that the train fills the entire temple, is to enter an experience only less momentous than our conversion, for it is a second conversion into the larger thought and love of God. "In Christ Jesus there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither bond nor free." "His train filled the temple."

¶ You need imagination for the missionary impulse, especially for foreign missions. You need the sense of the glory of the Lord, of the fulness of the whole earth, and of the voice that, crying, shakes the pillars of the house. It is not easy to conceive of a man of no imagination becoming a great missionary. It is the imagination of boyhood that leads many a man to the mission field, as it leads many a man to the sea. It is the romance of missions, the call of the deep and the wild. It is the same thing, with a consecration of faith added, that seals the resolve, and finally sends him abroad. To his vision of foreign lands he adds visions of redeemed peoples. His eye has seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. He dreams a dream of good. He has visions of an earth full of the knowledge and glory of God. He has the imagination of the adventurer with the consecration of the

prophet. Every missionary must be an idealist. The man who has no sympathy with missions is devoid of imagination, and sometimes he seems even a little proud of his defect.[1]

¶ After telling the story of the martyrdom of Perpetua the Roman matron, and the slaves Revocatus and Felicitas, in the beginning of the third century, Professor Gwatkin says:[2] "There is something here even more significant than the lofty courage of Perpetua, which forms the front of the story. From first to last she never dreams that Revocatus and Felicitas are less than her equals and companions in Christ. Enthusiasm might have nerved the matron and the slave apart; but no mere enthusiasm could have joined their hands in death. The mischievous eccentricities of Montanism are as dust in the balance while we watch the mighty working of the power of another world in which not only the vulgar fear of death is overcome, but the deepest social division of the ancient world is entirely forgotten."

v. *The Seraphim.*

"Above him stood the seraphim."

1. The seraphim are not mentioned elsewhere, and the origin and meaning of the name can only be supplied by conjecture. It must suffice to say that they appear here as the most exalted ministers of the Divine Being, in immediate proximity to Himself, and give expression to the adoration and reverence unceasingly due from the highest of created intelligences to the Creator. Possessed apparently of human form, and in an erect posture, they form a circle—or perhaps rather a double choir, about the throne, each with two of his wings seeming to support himself upon the air, with two covering his face, in reverence, that he might not gaze directly upon the Divine glory, and with two his own person, in humility, not deigning to meet directly the Divine glance. Can the scene be more aptly or more worthily reproduced than in our own poet's noble lines?—

> Fountain of light, thyself invisible
> Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sitt'st,
> Throned inaccessible, but when thou shadest
> The full blaze of thy beams, and through a cloud

[1] P. T. Forsyth, *Missions in State and Church*, p. 224.
[2] *Early Church History to A. D. 313*, ii. p. 127.

> Drawn round about thee like a radiant shrine
> Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear,
> Yet dazzle Heaven, that brightest Seraphim
> Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes.[1]

2. The seraphim, says Kautzsch (*Dictionary of the Bible*, v. 643), belong undoubtedly to the realm of angels. Although mentioned only in the vision of Isaiah (vi. 2), they appear there as well-known beings, so that the belief in them may certainly be assumed for the pre-Prophetic period. Furnished with six wings, they offer around God's throne antiphonal praise in the Trisagion; one of them purges the lips of the prophet, and announces to him the forgiveness of his sins. They are thus, in fact, intelligent beings, angels. Of the numerous explanations of the name, the only one that can be taken in earnest is that which traces it back to the singular *sārāph*. This word means properly "serpent" (Num. xxi. 8, Deut. viii. 15), and the seraphim must accordingly have been originally serpent-formed creatures—embodiments, indeed, of the serpent-like lightning flashes that play around Jehovah. But, in the case of the seraphim of Isaiah, the six wings may be regarded as all that has survived of this somewhat mythological form. Moreover (probably long before the time of Isaiah), they have assumed human form, as is evident not only from the song of praise (vi. 3), which would be inconceivable in a serpent's mouth, but from the hand (vi. 6) and the speech of the *sārāph* (vi. 7).

3. The first thing that strikes us about the seraphim is *their redundance of wings*. They had each six, only two of which were used for flying; the others, with which they shrouded their faces and their feet, were, apparently, quite superfluous. Why should they have had them when there was no fit employment for them? Was it not sheer waste to be possessing wings that were merely employed as covering, and never spread for flight? And yet, perhaps, without this shrouding of their faces and feet—an office which, at least, the wings performed—they might not have answered so well high heaven's purposes, might not have swept abroad with such undivided intentness and such entire abandonment on their Divine errands. Perhaps their upper and

[1] *Paradise Lost*, iii. 375.

lower parts needed to be swathed thus to make them the singly bent, the wholly absorbed ministers that they were. With unveiled faces and naked feet they might have been less prompt and alert, less concentrated and surrendered for the Lord.

¶ We meet sometimes with these seemingly wasted wings in men, in the form of powers or capabilities, knowledges or skills, for the exercise of which there is no scope or opportunity in their lot, which they are not called on or able to apply. There they lie, unutilised; nothing is done with them, no demand for them exists. To what end, we ask, have they been acquired? or what a pity, we say, that the men could not be placed in circumstances in which a field would be offered them, in which they would be wanted and drawn out! And yet, a knowledge or skill gained, may not be really wasted, though it be left without due scope and opportunity. The best, the finest use of it does not lie always in what it accomplishes, in the open product of its activity, but often in what has been secretly added to us or wrought into us, through gaining it, in the contribution which the gaining of it has been to our charactor or moral growth, in some nobler shaping of ourselves by means of it.[1]

(1) "With twain he covered his face." The first pair of wings suggest the need of the lowliest *reverence* in the worship of God. What does that lofty chorus of "Holy! holy! holy!" that burst from those immortal lips mean but the declaration that God is high above, and separate from, all limitations and imperfections of creatures? And we Christians, who hear it re-echoed in the very last Book of Scripture by the four and twenty elders who represent redeemed humanity, have need to take heed that we do not lose our reverence in our confidence, and that we do not part with godly fear in our filial love.

¶ The eldest daughter of Faith is Reverence. We remember how Moses acted at the Burning Bush: he went up to it at first merely from curiosity, but as soon as he heard the voice of God calling to him out of the fire, "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God." Without reverence of heart there can be no true worship; and the soul-reverence ought to be accompanied by reverence of posture and demeanour. It is not reverential to stand during praise with one's hand buried in one's trousers pocket, or to sit straight during prayer, and stare all over the church, or to go to or from public worship with a cigarette in one's mouth. These things ought not so to be.

[1] S. A. Tipple.

¶ A friend of mine, a clergyman, told me that he was once showing some one over his church. This person omitted to take his hat off on entering the church. "I hope you don't mind my keeping my hat on?" he said to my friend. "*I* mind? not at all!" was my friend's reply. "It isn't *my* house!"[1]

(2) The next pair of wings suggest the need of self-forgetfulness. "With twain he covered his feet." The wings made no screen that hid the seraph's feet from the eye of God, but it was the instinctive lowly sense of unworthiness that folded them across the feet, even though they, too, burned as a furnace. The nearer we get to God, the more we shall be aware of our limitations and unworthiness, and it is because that vision of the Lord sitting on "His throne, high and lifted up," with the thrilling sense of His glory filling the holy temple of the universe, does not burn before us that we can conceit ourselves to have anything worth pluming ourselves upon.

¶ Once lift the curtain, once let my eye be flooded with the sight of God, and away goes all my self-conceit, and all my fancied superiority over others. One little molehill is pretty nearly the same height as another, if you measure them both against the top of the Himalayas, that lie in the background, with their glittering peaks of snow. "Star differeth from star in glory" in a winter's night, but when the great sun swims into the sky they all vanish together. If you and I saw God burning before us, as Isaiah saw Him, we should veil ourselves, and lose all that which so often veils Him from us—the fancy that we are anything when we are nothing. And the nearer we get to God, and the purer we are, the more keenly conscious shall we be of our imperfections and our sins. "If I say I am perfect," said Job in his wise way, "this also should prove me perverse." Consciousness of sin is the continual accompaniment of growth in holiness. "The heavens are not pure in His sight, and He chargeth His angels with folly." Everything looks black beside that sovereign whiteness. Get God into your lives, and you will see that the feet need to be washed, and you will cry, "Lord! not my feet only, but my hands and my head!"

¶ He covered his feet in order, I suppose, that his very form and motion might not be seen; and therefore it is mentioned before "the flight." He did not set out until, as far as possible, himself was concealed. There shall be simply the fact of a mission, and the method: so that, if an "angel" were to bring God's embassy to you, you would not see "the angel." That is true embassy!

[1] W. J. Foxell.

In like manner, it was commanded of the high priest, that his garments should "go down to his feet," that the minister should not be seen.[1]

(3) "And with twain he did fly." The third pair of wings suggest *Service.* Whosoever, beholding God, has found need to hide his face from the Light, even whilst he comes into the Light, and to veil his feet from the all-seeing Eye, will also feel impulses to go forth in His service. For the perfection of worship is neither the consciousness of my own insufficiency, nor the humble recognition of His glory, nor the great voice of praise that thrilled from those immortal lips, but it is the doing of His will in daily life.

¶ Some people say the service of man is the service of God. Yes, when it is service of man, done for God's sake, it is so, and only then. The old motto, "Work is worship," may preach a great truth or a most dangerous error. But there is no possibility of error or danger in maintaining this: that the climax and crown of all worship, whether for us footsore servants upon earth, or for those winged attendants on the throne of the King in the heavens, is activity in obedience.

¶ The souls of modern men need all their wings to enable them to fly as quickly as their fellows, and they have none left wherewith to cover their faces and their feet.[2]

We can have little difficulty in discovering the *motive* from which the seraphim act. We see at once that it is love—the love of God which ever moves them. They fly away on swift wing to do God's will, but they ever return to the throne. That is the place of their rest; there they desire to dwell; and they dwell there adoring God, forgetting themselves and hiding all their own, that God may be all in all. Now nothing but love, the most intense love, can account for this. Only love can draw the creature to God, and make him desire to abide in His presence and to behold His glory. And thus we see that the great motive power in heaven is just that which ought to be the great motive power on earth—the love of God. And that indeed must move every intelligent being who will serve God, in whatever world he may dwell or to whatever race he may belong. When you go into some of the world's great workshops you see a vast variety of machinery, all, it may be, in motion,

[1] J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, iv. p. 5.

[2] Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, in *Concerning Isabel Carnaby.*

and engaged in a variety of operations; yet throughout that great manufactory there is just one motive power, so that what keeps going the gigantic hammer crushing in its descent the cold iron, also keeps in motion machinery which for delicacy of touch and operation the very spider might not excel. Even so, throughout His wide Kingdom God has many servants, and, we cannot doubt, many races of intelligent beings doing His will, and these engaged in an endless variety of labours, but the power which moves them all is the same—the sovereign power of love.

These then are the three—reverence and self-forgetfulness and active obedience,—"With twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." It is because of irreverence and self-conceit and idleness that our lives are weak. Go stand in the sight of God, and these wings of salvation shall come and clothe your life. They perfectly clothed the life of Jesus. Reverence and self-sacrifice and obedience were perfect in Him. In the most overwhelmed moments of His life,—crushed in the garden, agonised upon the cross,—he was really standing, like the strong seraphim, at the right hand of God.

¶ The seraphim were winged for service even while they stood above the throne and pealed forth their thunderous praise which shook the Temple. May we not discern in that a hint of the blessed blending of two modes of worship which will be perfectly united in heaven, and which we should aim at harmonising even on earth? "His servants serve Him and see His face." There is possible, even on earth, some foretaste of the perfection of that heavenly state in which no worship in service shall interfere with the worship in contemplation. Mary, sitting at Christ's feet, and Martha, busy in providing for His comfort, may be, to a large extent, united in us even here, and will be perfectly so hereafter, when the practical and the contemplative, the worship of noble aspiration, of heart-filling gazing, and that of active service shall be indissolubly blended.[1]

vi. *The Song of the Seraphim.*

"And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." It was

[1] A. Maclaren.

an antiphonal song, proceeding without interruption. Some of them commenced and others responded.

¶ I like to think of that. It was as if one of them cried, "Your strains are not lifted high enough; higher, brothers, higher!" And he cried across the intervening space to the seraphim opposite, and bade them rise to a higher note, till the chorus swelled and rose and broke. I have heard a bird in the spring morning cry to all the songsters of the glade till the whole woodland has rung again. Sometimes in our prayer-meeting an earnest man has shaken the very gates of heaven and has stirred the whole meeting. That is what we want. And as I tell you of a richer, fuller life, a life more abundant than many of you know, may you be convicted of the need of a new anointing, of a fresh application to the Son of God for the touch of fire. May ours be the seraph's reverence, with the veiled face; ours his modesty, with the veiled form; ours his balance of one-third obedience to two-thirds of contemplation. Then perhaps our cry may awaken similar results to his, and others shall cry, "Undone."[1]

Two of the Divine attributes form the theme of the seraphs' hymn—God's *holiness* as inherent in Himself, His *glory* as manifested in the earth.

1. Holiness, the first of these, denoted fundamentally a state of freedom from all imperfection, specially from all moral imperfection; a state, moreover, realised with such intensity as to imply not only the absence of evil, but antagonism to it. It is more than goodness, more than purity, more than righteousness: it embraces all these in their ideal completeness, but it expresses besides the recoil from everything which is their opposite. This is the sense which the word bears throughout Scripture. Israel is to be a holy nation; it is separated from the other nations of the earth, in order that it may reflect in idea the same ethical exclusiveness which is inherent in its God. The "Holy One of Israel," that fine designation, which is first used by Isaiah, and was indeed probably framed by him as the permanent embodiment of the truth so vividly impressed upon him in this vision, is a title which would remind the Israelite as he heard it of this distinctive attribute of his God, and arouse him to the duty of aiming after holiness himself. Holiness, again, is the attribute which in virtue of the tie uniting Jehovah and His people,

[1] F. B. Meyer.

prophets saw vindicated in their deliverance from tyranny or oppression: "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations"; or, "And the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall show myself holy in you before their eyes." And so it is to God's holiness that the Psalmist, persecuted but conscious of innocence, who has cried day and night without respite, appeals: "And thou art holy, who inhabitest the praises of Israel." The seraphs celebrate God not as the All-righteous, not as the All-powerful, or the All-wise; they celebrate Him under a title which expresses His essence more profoundly than any of these, and which marks more significantly the gulf which severs Him from all finite beings: they celebrate Him as the All-holy.[1]

¶ The Hebrew word for holiness springs from a root which means *to set apart, make distinct, put at a distance from.* When God is described in the Old Testament as the Holy One of Israel it is generally with the purpose of withdrawing Him from some presumption of men upon His majesty or of negativing their unworthy thoughts of Him. The Holy One is the Incomparable; "To whom then will ye liken me, that I should be equal to him? saith the Holy One" (xl. 25). He is the Unapproachable: "Who is able to stand before Jehovah, this holy God?" (1 Sam. vi. 20). He is the Utter Contrast of man: "I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee" (Hos. xi. 9). He is the Exalted and Sublime: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place" (lvii. 15). Generally speaking, then, holiness is equivalent to separateness, sublimity—in fact, just to that loftiness or exaltation which Isaiah has already so often reiterated as the principal attribute of God. In their thrice-repeated *Holy* the seraphs are only telling more emphatically to the prophet's ears what his eyes have already seen, *the Lord high and lifted up.*

"Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. vi. 5). "The Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth" (Jer. i. 9). "I saw . . . the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord . . . and I went in bitterness . . . but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me" (Ezek. i. 27, 28; iii. 14). These three utterances spoken severally by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, show a remarkable agreement in one respect between

[1] S. R. Driver.

the three prophets who were otherwise most unlike. They all record how a vision of God was the essence of their call. Because they had seen God, and had heard His voice, they could, and therefore must, speak to their fellow-men. So far there is a close similarity between them. But their circumstances were different, their gifts were different, their works were different; and so God also was pleased to make Himself known to them in different forms. In each case the vision which was granted to the prophet corresponded with his message. What the prophet had seen was the seal of that which he had to say. (1) In a season of outward prosperity Isaiah saw the Lord seated upon a throne, high and lifted up, in all His glorious majesty; and he was filled with the sense of holiness. (2) In the prospect of inevitable overthrow Jeremiah received the direct assurance of the Lord's sovereign Providence; and he was filled with a sense of trust. (3) In the desolateness of a strange land, a captive among captives, Ezekiel looked upon the emblems of God's all-quickening presence; and he was filled with the sense of stern courage.

The great missionary motive of the Church is the *enthusiasm for holiness.* The prophet received his mission in an atmosphere charged with unutterable holiness. It was not the poetic splendour of the vision which awed and stirred him. It was not the imaginative glory of the scene. That might have made him an artist, an orator, but not a prophet, not a missionary. What at once crushed and moved him, abased him and lifted him out of himself, was the glory of holiness. Every splendour seems to carry with it some trace of earth but this. It is the most unworldly of all unearthly things. It takes a man out of himself, shames him out of himself, gives him to his highest self and truest destiny. It puts the new song into his trembling lips. It endows the stammering man with mighty speech, and sends him forth from his abasement with all the power of the Spirit of God. It cleanses the very lips that it moves to confess themselves unclean, unclean. It emboldens the very conscience that it had just made to quail. It inspires with a grand fear which forgets fear. It gives a message to the man who feels in its presence that he is nothing and has nothing. When the enthusiasm of humanity comes it turns the spirit of adventure

into the spirit of help; but the enthusiasm of holiness makes the spirit of help the spirit of redemption. It not only consecrates the old, it creates a new spirit within us.

¶ It has been the song of the Church in hovel and palace, in the leafy groves and in the magnificent cathedral through mighty anthems, oratorios, and masses, and in children's melodies for thousands of years. Our old planet has forgotten it often in politics and in the hollow mockery of reform, but statesmanship and philanthropy, every congeries of powers set to make the world advance, or improve, has had at its core the truth not only that this is God's universe, but that the God of the universe is *holy*; and above every lasting triumph have fluttered the banners which bore the words: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts." Every army which has forgotten to count on the fact that the supremacy of this system of things lay in the hands of holiness has failed of permanent triumph. "The power not ourselves that makes for righteousness"—object to the theological way of saying it, and accept this, if you will; but to neglect that factor—"a power making for *righteousness*"—is to have the universe against you. Your financial authority of the majority, and your dreadful *vox populi*, are as straw beneath the feet of a dawning righteousness. Build in the night your icy wrong high as heaven, right will be here with sunrise and with a single ray tumble it down.[1]

2. But not only does the seraphic hymn celebrate the Divine nature in its own transcendent purity and perfection; it celebrates it as it is manifested in the material world—"The fulness of the whole earth is His glory." By "glory" we mean the outward show or state attendant upon dignity or rank: the glory, then, of which Isaiah speaks, is the outward expression of the Divine nature: pictured as visible splendour it may impress the eye of flesh; but any other worthy manifestation of the Being of God may be not less truly termed His glory. It is more than the particular attribute of power or wisdom; it is the entire fulness of the Godhead, visible to the eye of faith, if not to the eye of sense, in the concrete works of nature, arresting the spectator and claiming from him the tribute of praise and homage. It is that which in giant strokes is imprinted upon the mechanism of the heavens, and which, in the bold conception of the poet, "One day telleth another, and one night declareth to another," so far as the empire of heaven extends. It is that

[1] F. W. Gunsaulus.

which, as another poet writes, in the thunderstorm, when the clouds seem to part and disclose the dazzling brightness within, wrings from the denizens of God's heavenly palace the cry of adoring wonder. Conceived, again, as an ideal form of splendour, it is set by Isaiah before the Israelites as that which should be the object of their reverence, but which has been too often the object of their shamelessness and scorn: "For their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to defy the eyes of His glory." It is the attribute which is disclosed when those who are the enemies of truth and right are overcome, and the Kingdom of God is extended upon earth. "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: be thy glory over all the earth," prays the Psalmist: let Thy majesty be acknowledged more widely, more worthily, than it now is, amongst the nations of the world. The movements of history, in so far as they affect the welfare of Israel and promote God's purposes of salvation, are a progressive revelation of His glory: "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low," before the nation returning from its exile, "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

¶ It is said the whole earth is full of God's glory. You and I would be prepared to admit that, where the glory of God shines in the spray above Niagara, or where the morning tint is seen upon the Matterhorn and the evening glow upon the Jungfrau, or where the sun rises and sets upon the broad bosom of the Atlantic, or where the wake of the ships stirs the phosphorescence of the Mediterranean at night. But to be told that the *whole* earth is full of the glory of God, that startles us.

I know a place in London where a woman in a drunken frenzy put her child upon a hot iron bar; where a man beat to death his little crippled boy whose agonising cries were heard at night. I should not have thought that the glory of God was there. But the seraphim say the *whole* earth is full of the glory of God. We are reminded of what Elizabeth Barrett Browning says—

> Earth's crammed with Heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God,
> But only he that sees takes off his shoes.

¶ One day in London I was sitting in a dark omnibus. A man came in to examine our tickets, and I thought to myself, you will never be able to see whether they have been punctured aright. As I watched, curious to notice, he touched a little spring on his

breast, and in a tiny globe of glass a beautiful glow of electric light shone out. Manifestly the man could see anywhere, because he carried the light with which he saw. So we must understand that when the heart is full of God, you will find God anywhere and everywhere, as the miner carries the candle in his cap through the dark cavity of the earth, and lights his steps.[1]

¶ We are like children in a machine shop, who see this wheel revolving one way, and that wheel revolving another way, this wheel revolving rapidly, and that wheel revolving slowly, and who conclude that therefore there is no plan, no unifying force about it all. Or, to use another figure, we stand by a great loom, and see one side of the fabric, and it seems to be a crazy patchwork of shapes and colours. Isaiah caught a glimpse of the Engineer and saw that He was Master of all the wheels and belts and pulleys. Isaiah caught a glimpse of the Weaver at the loom and saw that the pattern was before Him all the while. So, ever afterward, whoever was on the throne of Judah, whoever ruled Israel, there was one man absolutely calm and contented, knowing that the King of kings was on the Great Throne, and that all earthly monarchs are but His puppets, with paper crowns and sceptres of straw. He was like Robert Browning's man, who "never dreamed though right were worsted, wrong would triumph." "What is your carpenter doing now?" said a Roman scoffer to an early Christian. "He is making a coffin for your emperor," was the reply. And He was. Nero is but a noxious memory. We name our dogs Nero. The Carpenter of Nazareth is on the throne of power, "Ancient of days yet ever new."[2]

'Tis not the temple's shrine
  Which holy makes the place,
Where'er God is, is power Divine;
  Where'er God helps is grace.

The bush on Horeb's peak,
  Burning and unconsumed,
The prophet bent to reverence meek,
  For God the spot illumed.

The sword at night beheld,
  By Jordan's swelling bed,
The captain of the host compelled
  To own the Lord who led.

[1] F. B. Meyer. [2] C. C. Albertson.

Think of thy God as near;
And, once His presence found,
Be sure, whate'er around appear,
Thou tread'st on holy ground.

Put off, O Man, thy shoes,
With which thou earth hast trod;
Thee from earth's dust and toil unloose,
And worship pay thy God.

So shalt thou find a light,
To burn and still endure;
A leader of all-conquering might
To make thy Canaan sure.[1]

vii. *The Effect of the Song.*

"And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke."

1. "The foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried"—and yet his face was covered with his wings. Dim, feeble, muffled sounds are the most we should have expected to proceed from them. With a covered face we associate the idea of silence. They are not the face-veiled whose voices ring out, whose words go forth abroad to agitate and thrill. Fancy the posts of the Lord's house quivering, and the prophet's heart stirred to its depths, beneath the cries of those whose heads are bowed and hid behind their wings! Here, however, is an image of much truth. Great, penetrating, inspiring utterances like the utterances of the seraphim of Isaiah's vision—are they not always connected with some deep, still inwardness, with some profound withdrawal and retirement of soul? Is it not always from such as have held their breath that they come? from such as have brooded oft in solitude, and sighed, being burdened? No one speaks with quickening energy, to the melting or rousing of his fellows, who has not dwelt apart, who has not had his moments, his hours, of dumb absorption, with bent brows and folded hands, when thought and feeling have weighed upon him heavily, and held him bound. There is no life, again, of noble activity and influence which does not rest

[1] Lord Kinloch.

on, and issue from, some inner, hidden life of careful self-discipline and quiet self-communion, which is not fed and sustained from behind with cherishings of faith and contemplation of ideas. "The more I ascend before men," said one, "the more I descend before Thee, O God!" and we may say, also, that to descend before God is to ascend before men.

2. "And the house was filled with smoke." The posts of the door moved at the voice which declared that the Holy One was there. The house was filled with smoke because the fire of His love was kindling the sacrifices. The sights and sounds of Sinai would not have made the Israelites tremble as they did if they had been merely sights and sounds of overwhelming and destructive power; they spoke first of Truth, of Holiness. And that Truth and Holiness did not dwell aloof and at a distance from the man, as in the burning mountain, but in the very house which every Israelite might claim as his own.

¶ Smoke is usually associated with God's wrath. But here the smoke that filled the house is hardly to be regarded as a symbol of the dark side of the self-manifesting God coming into view and His anger against sin. Analogies for such an interpretation of smoke in the house seem wanting. The cloud of smoke is rather the manifestation of Himself (iv. 5). The King, high and lifted up, is not immovable. He responds and gives a fuller token of Himself. On the spirits adoring what they knew there breaks a fuller knowledge and a more sensible nearness. If in the busy day the pillar seems cloud and smoke, in stiller hours it brightens into fire. And to the eastern seer God was a light more distinct and clearer far than to the dimmer vision of the western eye, when—

> On the glimmering light far withdrawn
> God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.[1]

II.

A Vision of Self.

Next in importance to a vision of God is a vision of ourselves. So far as we know, Isaiah was a young man of excellent character. No doubt he had the confidence and respect of all who knew him. The probabilities are that his life was above

[1] A. B. Davidson, in *The Expositor*, 4th Ser., vii. p. 246.

reproach. But when he got a glimpse of the Infinite Holiness he cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." No man can see God aright without feeling just as Isaiah did. When that vision rises up before him, all his pride, all his self-sufficiency, all the small moralities on which he is building will seem to him like blight and mildew on the leaves and flowers. Over against the Divine perfection his own righteousness will appear as filthy rags.

> The keen sanctity,
> Which with this effluence, like a glory, clothes
> And circles round the Deity, did seize
> And scorch and shrivel him; and now he lay
> Passive and still before the awful Throne!

i.

"Then said I, woe is me! for I am undone."

1. The sight of God has always a reacting influence on one's self. We always carry with us a sense of relation to God; and when we think of Him, we always think of ourselves. We cannot think of Him out of relation to ourselves. It is part of our thought of Him, that it always includes ourselves; for He is Sovereign, high and lifted up. This thought of Him is often fleeting and has little influence upon our mind, oftentimes no effect to influence our life permanently. Our sight of Him is often partial and reacts but feebly back upon ourselves. But a real sight of Him, such as the prophet had, will not be without a powerful effect upon our feeling regarding ourselves.

(1) The first thought it will occasion will perhaps be the one it occasioned to this prophet—fear. There will be such a sense of contrast between Him and us—Him the King and us—that it will beget terror. This was the common feeling in the Hebrew mind. The distance between Jehovah and the creature was so vast, the unworthiness of the creature was so great, that when suddenly brought into the presence of Jehovah the creature felt he must be consumed and die. "No man can see God and live."

(2) But this feeling of fear was succeeded by another. Though the first, it was not the last condition of the prophet's mind. In a brief space his mind ran through a history; and thought succeeded thought of his relation to God. In the vision a seraph flew to him with a live coal from the altar, and touched his lips, saying, "Thy sin is purged." Now these two things, his fear and this that succeeded, must be taken together. They are both required, in order to bring out the proper view of the effect on man of a full sight of God. First, fear; and then, following it, the sense of sin purged away. "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." If the sight of God stop with producing the first feeling merely, it will not have been a true, full sight of God. It will have been partial, imperfect. When God is revealed to the mind, it may be all perturbed, it may rock to and fro, and feeling after feeling pass over it. The prevailing tone may for a time be terror; but if the sight of God be full—as He is in Christ, as He is in Himself—the conclusion at the last will be peace.

¶ We have seen in Christ a holiness the prophet did not know. It is not less solemn, it is not less sublime, but it is more sweet, it is more deep, it is more abiding. It is not a vision, but a presence and a power. We have seen through the smoke which filled the house. We have seen the *face* of Him that sat upon the throne. We have seen the Cross upon the altar. We have seen that the holiness of God is the holiness of love. There is no such awful gulf fixed between the King and the creature. We too are kings in Him. The word we hear is judgment indeed, and fear, but it is more. It is our judgment laid on the Holy. It is *such* mercy, pity, peace, and love. It is, indeed, infinite tenderness; but it is soul tenderness, it is moral tenderness, it is atoning, redeeming tenderness. It is the tenderness of the Holy, which does not soothe but save. It is love which does not simply comfort, and it is holiness which does not simply doom. It is holy love, which judges, saves, forgives, cleanses the conscience, destroys the guilt, reorganises the race, and makes a new world from the ruins of the old.[1]

2. "I am undone."—What gave Isaiah this feeling?

(1) There was the conviction of unworthiness. This man, who of all Israel seemed to be the purest and sweetest, is the

[1] P. T. Forsyth.

man that bows the lowest and is most convinced of sin. God's children need to learn that lesson too. He had done good work, but God saw that he could do better, and so convicted him of the comparative unworthiness of his past ministry. Thus it befell that the man by whom God had spoken through five chapters (if we take the prophecies in their order as they stand) was a man who confessed to having unclean lips.

(2) There was the conviction that God was near. The great God had come down from the heavens. The whole earth is full of God, all time, all space; but now Isaiah felt the presence of the skirts of the Eternal falling upon him.

(3) There was the conviction of sin. Christmas Evans tells us in his diary that one Sunday afternoon he was travelling a very lonely road to attend an appointment in a village the other side of the slope, and he was convicted of a cold heart. He says, "I tethered my horse and went to a sequestered spot, where I walked to and fro in an agony as I reviewed my life. I waited three hours before God, broken with sorrow, until there broke over me a sweet sense of His forgiving love. I received from God a new baptism of the Holy Ghost. As the sun was westering, I went back to the road, found my horse, mounted it and went to my appointment. On the following day I preached with such new power to a vast concourse of people gathered on the hillside, that a revival broke out that day and spread through the whole Principality."

ii.

"Because I am a man of unclean lips."

The ethical process by which, in the imagery of the vision, Isaiah's sense of sinfulness came home to him, is finely natural and simple. It was at his lips that the consciousness of his impurity caught him. That, judged by our formulas and standards, might seem a somewhat superficial conviction of sin. We should have expected him to speak of his unclean heart, or the total corruption of his whole nature. But conviction of sin, actual conviction of sin, is very regardless of our theories, and is as diverse in its manifestations as are the characters and records of men. Sin finds out one man in one place, and another in a

quite different spot, and perhaps the experience is most real when it is least theological. Isaiah felt his defilement in his lips, for suddenly he found himself at heaven's gate, gazing on the glory of God, and listening to the seraphs' ceaseless song of adoring praise. Isaiah loved God, and instinctively he prepared to join his voice to the seraphs' chant, but ere the harmony could pass his lips he caught his breath and was dumb. A horrible sense of uncleanliness had seized him. His breath was tainted by his sin. He dare not mingle his polluted praise with the worship of that pure, sinless host of heaven. Oh, the shame and agony of that disability! for it meant that he has no part or place in that great scene. He is an alien and an intruder. Its beauty and its sweetness are not for him. He belongs to a very different scene and a very different company. He is no inhabitant of heaven, no servant of God; but a denizen of earth, and a companion of sinners. Down there, amid its squalor, and shame, and uncleanliness, is his dwelling-place, remote from heaven, and holiness, and God. "Woe is me! because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." With that, the horror of his situation reached its climax. He stands there, on the threshold of heaven in full sight of God and of His holiness, dumb and praiseless, while all heaven rings and reverberates with the worship of its adoring hosts. The awful tremor of that celestial praise passed into Isaiah's frame, and it seemed like the pangs of instant dissolution. He, a creature of God's, stands there in his Maker's presence, alone mute, alone refusing to chant his Creator's glory, a blot and blank in the holy harmony of heaven, a horrible and foul blemish amid the unsullied purity of that celestial scene. It seemed to Isaiah as if all the light, and glory, and holiness of heaven were gathering itself into one fierce lightning fire of vengeance, to overwhelm and crush him out of existence.

¶ It appears to me that up to this time profanity of language had been Isaiah's besetting sin. I should think that few will doubt that, when he says "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," he means to refer to a prevalence of profanity amongst his companions. Well, is it not the most natural explanation to believe that he had in his previous life given way to that sin, and now that is the sin that burns on his conscience? I have more

than once known this particular form of sin to be killed outright in one day; and whereas there are other besetting sins which, even when a man has been pardoned, cling to him for a lifetime, very often this one is got quit of in one hour, and never comes back again.[1]

¶ "I am a man of unclean lips." In vision the prophet sees the throne, beholds the seraphim, listens to their song, the *Trisagion*, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY!" Prompted to join in the august anthem that leaps from their lips, he at once realises that it ill becomes him to speak that thrice-uttered word, for he is unholy, he stands in his own way, he is too wicked to worship, and all about him are wicked too. I knew a collegian who was educated, but profane. His vocabulary of oaths was copious, but he, as every swearer has, shunned the prefix "holy." It is a terrible word. It means whole. It expresses integrity, completeness, and is a vocable that bad men shun. It is rarely used by any of us in speaking of the dead. We may say of the departed, "He was good, amiable, or honest," but none, unless it be a clergyman in the pulpit discourse, says, "he was holy." Swearers shun the word. It is a gun that kicks more than it shoots. Yet we are told to "follow holiness" as a vocation, a business, if we would hope to see God. Holiness is everything or nothing.[2]

iii.

"And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

Every soul has an environment, which it affects, and by which it is affected; and no question of guilt or innocence, forgiveness or condemnation, is limited to the individual by himself. This truth, which goes far back into the history of man's ideas about himself, is emphatically presented in the Bible. Thus Ps. 51, which gives expression most poignantly to the sense of personal guilt, also represents the sinner as born in a sinful environment: so here, Isaiah is conscious not only that he is a man of unclean lips, but that he dwells among a people of unclean lips. Not only is sin a personal act of rebellion, but it produces a sinful atmosphere, a condition of alienation from God. In like manner, the absolution or declaration of freedom from sin cannot concern

[1] J. Stalker, in *Christian World Pulpit*, xliii. p. 389.
C. S. Robinson, in *The Homiletic Review*, xvi. p. 248.

the individual alone: it must have an eye also to the society in which he lives and to his relations towards it.[1]

There is a sense of the sin in society which makes a man not a Pharisee, but a prophet. It is easy to be cynical at the expense of our fellows, and to pour out stinging satires on the shams and weaknesses of society; but that is not the dominant spirit of the highest ministry. In the all-searching light of this vision, Isaiah sees that the world in which he lives is full of such shams; speech is a symbol and expression of life, and speech which should be clean and sweet, as well as truthful and strong, is vile and unclean. But the life of sinful people is the life the prophet shares, the atmosphere he breathes, the sphere in which he lives and moves. He cannot flee to the wilderness and leave it all behind. He must be in this world, but not of it; this he can do because he has learned that sin is an alien power in himself and in society. It is treason to the Divine King; in the name and by the power of the King it can be conquered. Through the influence of this deep revelation he can be a statesman as well as a religious teacher, a social reformer as well as a sacred singer, and through it all a saint. The vision means, then, the possibility of service. If there were no King a man might be content to be a time-server, but to the man who has seen the King the way of highest service is open, and he is "not disobedient to the heavenly vision." Life, then, finds its real meaning in service to God and man. Behind this man's call to service there are certain great convictions which are a prophecy of, and a preparation for, the rich personal experience which is fully revealed in our Lord Jesus, and quickened in us by the power of His great sacrifice.[2]

iv.

"For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

1. The sleeping snake that is coiled in every soul stirs and begins to heave in its bulk, and wake, when the thought of a holy God comes into the heart. Now, I do not suppose that consciousness of sin is the whole explanation of that universal human feeling, but I am very sure it is an element in it, and I suspect that if there were no sin, there would be no shrinking.

[1] T. B. Strong, in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, i. p. 49.
[2] W. G. Jordan, *Prophetic Ideas and Ideals*, p. 62.

2. The immediate effect of the vision on Isaiah was an overpowering consciousness of his sinfulness, and a fear of instant death at the hand of God. It was apparently a universal belief among the ancient Hebrews that the sight of God would be instant death to a man. We see this clearly in the fear of Gideon when he discovered that his unknown visitor was "the angel of the Lord" (Judg. vi. 22); so with Manoah (Judg. xiii. 22), and Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 30; see also Ex. xxiv. 11, and Gen. xvi. 13). The Greek myth of Jupiter and Semele, and the Greek ideas about *νυμφολημψία* show that similar views were not unknown even outside of Israel. And among the Hebrews this doctrine is not due to revelation; it appears in the history always as a tradition inherited from remote antiquity—a natural outgrowth of the natural consciousness of sin. It forms a strange illustration of the knowledge man has always had of his own guilt in God's sight, and the danger of Divine punishment he constantly lies under. Man cannot conceive God appearing to him for any other purpose than to execute judgment; so pure is God, so impure is man! This belief may have degenerated with many into a mere superstition, a blind belief whose meaning and reason were forgotten; it seems little better with Manoah. But it is not so with Isaiah. He knows well the reason of his danger: "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips." He feels his own sin, and feels his solidarity with a nation that is sinful too. God's mind towards the whole nation must be one of wrath and threatening, unmitigated by the presence of righteous persons to leaven the mass. (See Gen. xviii. 23–33.)

¶ The central fact is the vision of God as King—"Mine eyes have seen the King." You say, no man can see God and live. That is quite true; as we here see, this man did not live; in a very deep sense he died. The vision of God kills that it may make alive; the fire of the Divine revelation burns up the dross of pride and passion. The great need of that time is also our own great need, a true vision of the Divine, a lofty thought of God. This alone can meet the hunger of Isaiah's soul and save the nation from utter failure. The popular religion was crude and impure; many worshipped idols, many ran after a spurious spiritualism, or reduced religion to a sensuous ritualism (i. 11, ii. 8, viii. 18). That which made a hero of this young man, and gave power to the

purest religion of his day, was the force which also nerved our fathers to cast out superstition and fight for liberty; the vision of a God who is supreme, who through His righteousness is really kind, who is revealed in Nature, who rules the nations and who does not disdain the cry of the penitent soul. No argument can do justice to this; it is a vision and a life. The saints and martyrs point to it as the object of their love and the source of their strength. Men of mighty intellect, of childlike heart, of pure spiritual aspiration, have through its inspiration saved the nation from despair and the Church from failure. The men who have borne the burdens and fought the battles which helped forward the world's highest life, knew the meaning of the words, "Mine eyes have seen the King."[1]

3. The Incarnation has made the prophetic vision permanent. And in this respect the Incarnation, which has brought God very near to us, has not lessened His awfulness. It has indeed made known undreamt-of powers, destinies, significances in things visible and temporal. It has, to the sight of faith, transfigured the earth, but it has not lowered heaven. He whom Isaiah beheld was, as St. John tells us, Christ Himself: *he saw His glory and spake of Him;* and His glory is unchanged and unchangeable. He became very man, not to bind us with new ties to earth as we see it, but to disclose its unseen potencies. He became man, that He might give us boldness to approach the footstool of His Father; that He might lift us to a sublimer region while we are ever striving to bring things to the standards of sense; that He might enable us to ascend in Him to that which is spaceless and timeless, which is apprehended by the soul alone, and which alone is able to fill the soul.

It is in this sense that St. Paul tells us that when he realised the scope of the work of Christ, *though he had once known Him after the flesh, yet he knew Him so no more.* We must strive towards the same purity of knowledge. "Christ after the flesh" corresponds in some way to the fabric of the visible sanctuary. That which belongs to the senses is our starting-point and not our goal. We in our turn are bound to use the limited revelation, that we may rise beyond it in hope, in prayer, in effort.

No one of us indeed would question in words our Lord's immutable Deity. No one would question that He came to us

[1] W. G. Jordan.

in the Father's name, to reveal the Father to us. Yet is it not true that, practically, we are all tempted to think of Him as He moved about among men under the limitations of earthly existence? Is it not true that we are tempted to substitute Him *for* the Father to whose presence He leads us? Is it not true that our faith in consequence is in peril of becoming unmanly, sentimental, fantastic, unbraced by the generous discipline of reverence, unpurified by the spiritual fire of awe?

¶ For eight years Dannecker, the German sculptor, laboured upon a marble statue of the Christ. When he had worked upon it for two years it seemed to him that the statue was finished. What more could he do to add to its perfection? To test the matter, however, he one day called a little girl into his studio, and, directing her attention to the statue, said, "Who is that?" She replied promptly, "A great man." He turned away disheartened. He felt that he had failed, and that his two years of labour had been lost. But he began anew. He toiled on for six years more, and then, inviting another little child into his studio, repeated the inquiry, "Who is that?" This time he was not disappointed. After looking in silence awhile, the child's curiosity deepened into awe and reverence, and bursting into tears, she said softly, "Suffer little children to come unto Me." It was enough. The untutored instinct of the child had led her to the right conclusion, and he knew that his work was a success. Dannecker declared afterwards that in his solitary vigils he had seen a vision of Christ, and had but transferred to the marble the image which the Lord had shown him. Some time later Napoleon Bonaparte requested him to make a statue of Venus for the gallery of the Louvre. But he refused, saying, "A man who has seen Christ would commit sacrilege if he should employ his art in the carving of a pagan goddess. My art henceforth is a consecrated thing."[1]

4. The title **Lord of Hosts** has a history.

(1) It is possible that at one time the title suggested the idea of Jahweh as *the leader of the Israelite forces.* In favour of this view is the fact that the word *sabaoth* outside this phrase always refers to bodies of men, and usually to Israelite forces. There is no doubt that in the early stages of the history of the nation the popular view of the functions of Jahweh was concentrated to a large extent on this point, that He was the guider and commander of the armies in warfare; and the same

[1] R. F. Coyle.

idea lingered late, and lies at the bottom of the objection to the institution of the monarchy which is put in Samuel's mouth (cf. 1 Sam. viii. 20 with 1 Sam. xii. 12). In the same way, David, as he taunts Goliath, says to him, "I come in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Sam. xvii. 45). (2) So we are brought to another view, which may merely mark a later stage: the "hosts" are *the spiritual forces which stand at God's disposal.* So in Josh. v. 13, 14, when Joshua asks the unknown warrior whether he is on their side or on that of their enemies, the implied answer of the Divine stranger is that he belongs to neither side, but is come as captain of the Lord's host to succour His people. (3) The third stage is reached in the prophets, especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Malachi, where the title assumes a far wider meaning and embraces *all the forces of the universe.*[1]

Every man's vision of the true God of history or of hope repeats this of Isaiah. Behind every great statesman, or reformer, whether he speaks our theologic dialect or not, is a vision of the power which leads the universe and every atom of it to lofty ends, whose forces run everywhere, whose flowing robes fill the whole palace of life and being, and whose energies are more than we see and hear and know, and above us,—the Lord of hosts. A man need not believe intelligently all the truth about a seraph and cherub, but if he is to organise society and guide men well, if he is to reform abuses and reconstitute broken-down humanity, he must, with the inner eye of thought and faith, see that the powers above life are supreme over those beneath it, that there are more and finer energies in the unseen than in the seen, that they that are for us are more than they that be against us, and that around every Elisha are chariots and horses in the clouds which are the invisible reserve of God and man. This faith in unseen truths and powers has made men brave enough to be statesmen rather than politicians. They have counted upon the reality of what they did not see. The merely shrewd politicians have looked and listened and put all their visible forces into their own measures and methods. The

[1] H. C. O. Lanchester, in Hastings' *Single-Volume Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 551*b*.

statesmen have looked and listened also, but with the unseen power of truth and right and God; they have counted on the hosts of the Lord. They have known that ideas and principles are God's messengers to command men and lead them; they have believed that progress is made by the rule of the powers above man's vision, rather than that of those below it; and not politicians, but statesmen have ruled the world. So all reform depends on a Lord of hosts.

¶ The Greeks, looking at the heavens above them and at the earth around them, beholding everywhere order, called what they saw cosmos—beauty of harmony. The Romans, discovering the same harmonious relations and movements, named the entirety of creation a universe—combined as one. To the poetic imagination of the Hebrews, with their knowledge of the omnipotent, reigning God, the regularity and order everywhere apparent suggested an army in vast, numerous, and varied divisions acting under the command of one will, and that will Jehovah's. The Lord of hosts, He is the King, the King who sitteth upon the throne of the universe.[1]

v.

"Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar."

1. "I am a man of unclean lips." "I am undone!" It was because that conviction and confession sprang in the prophet's consciousness that the seraph winged his way with the purifying fire in his hands. Which being translated is just this: faith alone will not bring cleansing. There must go with it what we call, in our Christian phraseology, repentance, which is but the recognition of my own antagonism to the holiness of God, and the resolve to turn my back on my own past self. Now, it seems to me[2] that a great deal of what is called, and in a sense is, evangelical teaching, fails to represent the full counsel of God in the matter of man's redemption, because it puts a one-sided emphasis on faith, and slurs over the accompanying idea of repentance. And I am here to say that a trust in Jesus Christ, which is unaccompanied by a profound penitent con-

[1] J. D. Davis. [2] A. Maclaren.

sciousness and abhorrence of one's sins, and a resolve to turn away from them for the time to come, is not a faith which will bring either pardon or cleansing. We do not need to have less said about trust; we need to have a great deal more said about repentance.

But the seraph did not come in his own personality alone; he did not say, I can remove all the impurity of which thou dost complain; it lies within my power to make thee a good man. No such speech did he make. It is not in mortal to purify mortality. This help that we need is supernatural aid. Even a seraph cannot redeem, purify, or forgive.

¶ Now, mark this: the angel was not told to go, but he knew just what to do. The fact is, the angels have gone so often for the live coal, that whenever they hear a sinner crying that he is undone, they go for it; they do not need to be told. It is as if a druggist's boy were so in the habit of getting the same medicine for the same symptoms, that when the patient comes to the door he knows just what medicine to seek, without going to the doctor to get advice.[1]

2. As soon as the consciousness of sin and the aversion from it spring in a man's heart, the seraph's wings are set in motion. The two are as closely synchronous as the flash and the peal. Remember that beautiful old story in the historical books, of how the erring king, brought to sanity and repentance by Nathan's apologue, put all his acknowledgments in these words, "I have sinned against the Lord"; and how the confession was not out of his lips, nor had died in its vibration in the atmosphere, before the prophet, with Divine authority, replied with equal brevity and completeness, and as if the two sayings were parts of one sentence, "*And* the Lord hath made to pass the iniquity of thy sin." That is all. Simultaneous are the two things. To confess is to be forgiven, and the moment that the consciousness of sin rises in the heart, that moment does the heavenly messenger come to still and soothe.

3. "A live coal." The thing called in the A.V. a "live coal," and in the R.V. margin a "hot stone," is peculiarly Oriental, belonging to a state of society that has now passed away in the West; and hence we have in English no word that

[1] F. B. Meyer.

properly translates it. The rendering "a live coal," *i.e.* a burning log (for of course in those days the fuel was wood), is totally wrong, and, indeed, the conception is too grotesque to be for a moment entertained. The *rizpah* is a stone kept in all ancient Oriental households as a means of applying heat to household purposes. In order to bake cakes (cf. 1 Kings xix. 6, "a cake baked on the hot stones"), or to roast flesh, the stone was first heated in the fire, and the wet dough or the flesh spread out upon it, the stones as they grew cold being exchanged for hot ones fresh from the fire. To boil milk, the hot stone was plunged into it when contained in the leathern skin that served alike as cauldron and as pitcher. The prophet, carrying the similitude of an earthly household into the heavenly palace, assumes the presence of such an utensil on the hearth, which here, of course, must be conceived as an altar, on the model of God's earthly dwelling-place. A seraph takes the hot stone from the altar and lays it on the prophet's lips, which he had himself mentioned as the special seat of sin, and announces to him also in words the forgiveness of his guilt: "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

It is this swift and simple domestic process which Isaiah now sees substituted for the slow and intricate ceremonial of the temple—a seraph with a glowing stone in his hand, *with tongs had he taken it off the altar.* And yet the prophet feels this only as a more direct expression of the very same idea with which the elaborate ritual was inspired—for which the victim was slain, and the flesh consumed in fire, and the blood sprinkled. Isaiah desires nothing else, and receives no more, than the ceremonial law was intended to assure to the sinner—pardon of his sin and reconciliation to God. But our prophet will have conviction of these immediately, and with a force which the ordinary ritual is incapable of expressing.

¶ The Syriac Fathers are said to have regarded the burning coal as the symbol of the Incarnate Son of God; and we may well see a profound fitness in the symbolism. The burning coal in Isaiah's vision purged away his disabling uncleanness, and inspired him with the will and the power to obey the Call of God. This two-fold grace of purification and inspiration is the gift of the

Incarnate Son to His brethren. The Gospel indeed includes a narrative which might seem the Christian counterpart of Isaiah's record of vocation. The revelation of God to an Apostle is realised through the same cycle of spiritual experiences. First, conviction of sin; then, consciousness of pardon; finally, a clear commission. Simon Peter, when he saw the sign which discovered the Presence of the Incarnate, fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord . . . and Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.[1]

vi.

"And he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

1. The action of the seraph was of course symbolic, but the thing symbolised is a great spiritual fact. In it we have mirrored the very heart of the process of redemption. The cleansing efficacy of the burning ember resided not in the ember, but in the Divine fire contained in it. In the imagery of sacrifice the fire is always conceived as God's method of accepting and taking to Himself the offering. The sacred flame that comes down from God licks up the sacrifice, and in vapour carries it up to heaven; a sweet-smelling savour represents, therefore, the pitying holiness of God, that stoops forgivingly to sinful men, and graciously accepts and sanctifies them and their sacrifices. Contact with that has sin-cleansing power, and nothing has besides.

2. If anything is clear exegetically, it is the coinciding of the prophet's forgiveness with the application of the sacramental sign. The moment he rises from that act of sacramental communion, he exclaims in the full consciousness of a Divine absolution, "Here am I, send me." This allusion to a sacrament may furnish the best solution of the seraph's reassuring message. A sacrament is something more than a momentary act. It is an act that symbolises the passing into a forgiven and lifelong state—a state that is best described by God's eternal *now*; not "shall be," but "is." Hence, to paraphrase his language, it might read, "Lo, this glowing stone *touches* thy mouth, and, as

[1] H. H. Henson, *The Liberty of Prophesying*, p. 253.

you kneel in silent receptivity under the mystic sign, I, as heaven's delegate, pronounce the words *Absolvo Te* — Thine iniquity *passeth away*, and thy sin *is expiated*!" So that the forgiveness in Isaiah's vision may be treated as follows:—

(1) *Its Divine origin*—a glowing stone "from the altar."

(2) *Its completed character*—"Thine iniquity is taken away."

(3) *Its adaptability to the individual man*—"Lo, this hath touched *thy lips*!"[1]

3. This symbolic act of the angel would perhaps be quite intelligible to the contemporaries of the prophet; but it is undoubtedly very obscure to us. The act is intended to shadow forth in some way the cleansing of the prophet from sin; but what is the connection between such cleansing and the touching of Isaiah's lips with the stone heated on the altar fire? What is the *tertium comparationis* of the symbol? The stone is a means of applying fire, as we have seen; when, therefore, it is brought to the lips of the prophet, it is the same as if the whole altar-fire had been brought there; and that again is the same as if the prophet's "unclean lips" had been laid on the altar. The everyday use of the stone would at once suggest this to the mind of Isaiah's hearers. The angel's act, therefore, is as much as to say: "Lo, I lay thy sinfulness on the altar-fire; and thou art cleansed from sin thereby." But how should laying on the altar cleanse from sin? Gesenius, in his *Commentary*, compares Malachi iii. 2, 3 ("a refiner's fire"), and refers us to the belief, so widespread in antiquity, in the purifying power of fire. But, even if this were not too mechanical, and almost too magical, to satisfy us, laying on God's altar fire irresistibly suggests sacrifice; and we can hardly suppose that the prophet did not, in some way, have sacrifice in his mind. It is to be presumed, at the very least, that the meaning of the prophet is not different from what he believed to be the meaning of sacrifice. Now, whatever differences of opinion there may be regarding other parts of the sacrificial ritual, all schools agree that the laying of the sacrifice on the altar and burning it, in whole or in part, signifies its presentation to God. The sacrifice is given to God by being burnt; no one supposes that the burning is to purify or "refine" it. The idea of purifying

[1] J. Adams, *Sermons in Syntax*, p. 204.

is totally irrelevant to the laying of sacrifices on the altar-fire. To lay on the altar is to give up to God—to make wholly His. Here, then, the angel says to Isaiah in substance this: "Thy sin-defiled nature" ("lips") "I lay on God's altar. I will make it all His again. The uncleanness of thy nature consisted in its opposition to God, for all sin is selfish action, as opposed to action for God, and now all the opposition of thy nature to God is taken away. Thy nature is, by this act, devoted wholly to God. By Divine power thou hast been suddenly, miraculously, turned into one from whom all selfish thoughts and words and deeds are taken away, into one whose every thought and desire is toward God; into one wholly consecrated and devoted to God; and therefore into one wholly pure."

¶ Observe the manner in which sin, that is the *guilt* of sin, is here, as evermore in Holy Scripture, spoken of as taken away by a free act of God, an act of His in which man is passive; in which he has, so to speak, to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord; an act to which he can contribute nothing, save indeed only that divinely awakened hunger of the soul after the benefit which we call faith. It is quite another thing with the *power* of sin. In the subduing of the power of sin we must be fellow-workers with God; all the faculties of our renewed nature will need to be strained to the uttermost. So, too, it is quite another thing with the *stain* of sin: this, to be effaced, will demand the fuller's soap and the refiner's fire; the patient toil, it may be the many tears, of him who would indeed have this stain effaced from his soul. But, in the matter of getting rid of the *guilt* of sin, we have nothing to do but to stand still and see the work of our God. This is the universal language of Scripture, and with nothing less than this will the heart of man be content. When Joshua, the high-priest (the passage, let me say, constitutes a most instructive real parallel to the present), stands before the Lord "clothed with filthy garments," the word of grace which goes forth concerning him, "Take away the filthy garments from him," is in its essence identical with this; the interpretation of that symbolic act following close upon the act itself—"Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee." It is this which in Scripture the saints of God, who feel themselves sinners too, crave after; such an act of taking away as shall be wholly God's, and which, as being such, shall be perfect—"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." It is this which the soul, rejoicing in its deliverance from the condemnation of sin, avouches that it has received: "As far as the east is distant

from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us"; or again, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."[1]

4. It was at Isaiah's lips that the sense of sin had stung him, and it was there that he received the cleansing. The seraph laid the hot ember on his lips, and it left about his mouth the fragrance of the celestial incense. He felt that he breathed the atmosphere and purity of heaven. He, too, might now join in heaven's praise and service; no more an alien, but a member of the celestial choir and a servant of the King. That act of Divine mercy had transformed him. He was a new creature, and instantly the change appeared. The voice of God sounds through the Temple, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And the first of all heaven's hosts to answer is Isaiah.

5. That Isaiah's vision does mean and imply all this, we who accept the New Testament as the Word of God can have no doubt; for it was after quoting from this very vision that St. John wrote: "These things spake Isaiah when he saw his glory (the glory of the Christ), and spake of *him*." But if we accept this inspired interpretation of Isaiah's vision, think how much it implies,—a truth how far-reaching, a hope how large and sublime. It assures us (1) that the sin of man was no unforeseen accident which the eternal purposes of God did not include, but was part of that Divine education and discipline by which God is training His many sons for honour, glory, and immortality. It assures us (2) that, though our Father in heaven cannot but be pained to the very heart by our sins, yet His love is not alienated from us by them, but has been working from all eternity for our redemption and renewal. It assures us (3) that though, because of our iniquity, we cannot be redeemed without pain, though we must die to live, God will spare us no pain by which we may be purged from our iniquity and formed anew, fitted for His service and made meet to partake His glory.

¶ There is a hymn of Newton, eight stanzas, "In Evil long I took Delight," which I call "Two Looks." The stanza, "I saw One hanging on a tree," introduces the first. The other is intro-

[1] R. C. Trench, *Sermons New and Old*, p. 106.

duced by the words, "A second look He gave," and the lyric concludes in these words—

Thus, while His death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
Such is the mystery of grace
It seals my pardon, too.[1]

A Vision of Duty.

Great events in history are dated—the battle of Waterloo, the passing of the Reform Bill. Most men have also in their own life one or more events to which there is an exact date attached. Isaiah had such an event. It was his call to the work of his life. "In the year that King Uzziah died," he says, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne. . . . And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send?"

He describes the event vividly. We see it clearly with him. We seem to stand with the young prophet at the very mouth of Heaven; all mean and low ambitions die away; there are lightnings and thunderings and voices; the tremendous forces which we always knew must be at the centre of the universe seem about to be revealed.

But the most touching part is yet to come: so far it has been only what we expect; if we had thought about the matter at all, we should have known that the power which can daily keep twenty million flaming suns circling round itself must be terrific; we should have guessed that when we could get clear goodness disentangled from the evil of the world, its Author must be Holy, holy, holy, and make the seraphim bow down in awe, but what we should never have dreamt is what comes next; a voice comes from the centre of the burning light; the Godhead has a need; "Whom shall I—the true God—send, and who will go for us—the Three in One?"—*The Godhead asks for men.*

¶ In his controversy with John Stuart Mill, the French philosopher Comte said: "My Deity (Humanity) has at least one advantage over yours—he needs help and can be helped." Mill met the charge by the saying, that the theist's God is not omnipotent, "He can be helped, Great Worker though He be."

[1] C. S. Robinson.

But we are not compelled to doubt or deny the omnipotence of Deity before we can believe that our part in the Divine movement of the world is not a passive one; that we are not simple recipients and blind instruments, but allies and helpers of the Eternal Power.

The subject contains (1) the Divine call, and (2) the human response to it.

i. *The Divine Call.*

"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

1. How do we hear it? It is probable that we hear it first as a call from below, the cry of human need. There is a cry which comes swelling up from sickbeds, from hospitals, from men in doubt, from men in trouble, from men struggling with deadly temptations, from lads adrift, from children left upon the world, from girls driven by poverty to the streets, from heathen lands, from Africa, from India, from China—"Whom wilt thou send? and who will come to us?"

¶ One time at a meeting of the General Assembly, an effort was made to raise funds enough to send a young Princeton graduate to India as a missionary. A teacher in a home mission school was seen by her hostess to slip a gold ring from her finger and put it on the collection plate. Asked afterwards by the lady whose guest she was why she did it, she replied, "Because I had no money, and because I knew what it would mean if the effort to send this missionary failed." Not long before, she had been told that she would have to give up her own school because there were no funds to support it. But she would not give it up. She held on with magnificent heroism, and she contributed the ring with all its sacred associations to help another to do what was so near her own heart.

Next morning a commissioner brought the ring into the General Assembly and told the story of it. It was worth about five dollars. "I will give five dollars to send the ring back to the young woman," said a minister. "I will give five dollars," said the stated clerk. A newspaper reporter handed up five dollars to the platform. Pastors, missionaries, visitors came forward readily with the cash, each one eager to have some share in restoring the ring. In less than ten minutes more than three hundred dollars had been passed up to the desk. It was all caused by the vision they got of the self-sacrificing love that flamed in the heart of that little woman, making her glad to do something for her dear Master.[1]

[1] R. F. Coyle.

This human cry is often a challenge to God. "There is no God, or if there is He does not care." It is really God's challenge to us. "God has been preparing His answer; just as in the hidden laboratory of nature the coal has been slowly prepared for the world's need of warmth; just as, nursed in secret stores, electricity has been prepared for the world's need of light and speed; just as, in the slow working of history, the fundamental answer to all problems was prepared in the Incarnation, so year after year, by quiet influences, by teaching, by a mother's prayers, by school sermons, by an education given only to a few, God has been slowly preparing His answer to this cry, and *you, my brother, are the answer.*

So when the cry from below is heard, the ear opens to the call from above. And then the human cry becomes more articulate and insistent. Moses heard the cry of his countrymen, and struck a blow for them. But on the first intimation of danger he fled. Then God came and sent him down into Egypt to deliver them, and he was no longer afraid of the wrath of the king.

¶ Let me tell you of a man I knew in India—George Bowen by name. He was a classical scholar of distinction, and was at home in four of the principal languages of Europe. For years he revelled in poetry and philosophy, in romance and controversy, in all those languages. He was, besides, a fine musician; could compose as well as perform. In his early manhood Bowen was a philosophic sceptic and a rank pessimist. At last, however, there came to him a great experience, which made him feel the need, and ultimately see the truth, of immortality. From that point he was led on, until one night he sat down and wrote these words: "If there is One above all who notices the desires of men, I wish He would take note of the fact, that if it please Him to make known His will concerning me I should think it the highest privilege to do that will wherever it might be and whatever it might involve." It was a cry out of darkness, and not long after that Jesus Christ came to George Bowen. There soon grew up in him a new sense of obligation to humanity. He was led to leave wealth for poverty, to turn from the society of the cultured and friendly that he might care for the needs of the ignorant and prejudiced, to renounce a luxurious home for a mud-walled hut. He went to India, and for forty years, without one single change, he dwelt among the people of that land. Persecution, epidemic, the fierce enervating heat could not drive him away from the crowded streets of Bombay.

He was consumed with a passion for bettering the people amongst whom he lived, and he laid down his life on their behalf.[1]

2. Is the Divine Call irresistible, then? No, it is not irresistible, even when it is heard from above. God's "state is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed, and post o'er land and ocean without rest"—but they are all volunteers. He has no pressgang in His employ, and He accepts no pressed service.

1. A man may hear it as if it were irresistible. Such an one was Paul, who could say: "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." Such an one was Richard Baxter, of whom Dr. Jowett said: "As the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, so did the people of Kidderminster repent at the preaching of Baxter"; and of whose book—*The Saints' Rest*—a recent writer remarks: "The book glows through and through with the red heat of sacred flame, at which the soul catches fire." Such an one again was Brainerd, who prayed that he might become a flaming fire for God. Such an one was Alexander Duff, who, both in India and in Scotland, kindled to a sacred passion the congregations who listened to his burning words. And such an one in our own time was James Gilmour, who, when urged by his friends to desist from labours which were consuming him, cried: "I cannot be silent; the fire of God is on me."

2. A man may resist it, but it is never the same with him afterwards. If the call has come and been rejected, there is a steady loss of life. For no one can lay hold on life by shirking its opportunities. And the loss is none the less tragic that it is unrecognised. For—

> When we in our viciousness grow hard—
> O misery on't!—the wise gods seel our eyes;
> In our own filth drop our clear judgements; make us
> Adore our errors; laugh at's, while we strut
> To our confusion.

¶ In a stirring article entitled "Is Life worth Living?" Professor James remarks: "If this life be not a real fight, in which something is eternally gained for the universe by success, it is no better than a game of private theatricals, from which one may withdraw at will. But it *feels* like a real fight." And he concludes by urging that our attitude on this matter is necessarily one of faith.

[1] Henry Haigh.

Believe, he says, that life is worth living, and your belief will half create the fact. The "scientific proof" that you are right may not be clear before the day of judgment (or some stage of Being which that expression may serve to symbolise) is reached. But the faithful fighters of this hour, or the beings that then and there will represent them, may then turn to the faint-hearted, who here decline to go on, with words like those with which Henry IV. greeted the tardy Crillon after a great victory had been gained: "Hang yourself, Crillon! we fought at Arques, and you were not there."[1]

3. The acceptance of the call is necessary to salvation. For no mistake can be made that is more mischievous than to suppose that salvation is the rescue of one's own soul from the wrath to come. There is no such thing. All rescue is from sin to holiness. This is the wrath to come—that we should be left in our selfishness. There is a Talmudic legend to this effect—

Side by side
In the low sunshine by the turban stone
They knelt; each made his brother's woe his own,
Forgetting, in the agony and stress
Of pitying love, his claim of selfishness;
Peace, for his friend besought, his own became;
His prayers were answered in another's name;
And, when at last they rose up to embrace,
Each saw God's pardon in his brother's face!

Long after, when his headstone gathered moss,
Traced on the targum-marge of Onkelos
In Rabbi Nathan's hand these words were read:
"Hope not the cure of sin till self is dead;
Forget it in love's service, and the debt
Thou canst not pay the angels shall forget;
Heaven's gate is shut to him who comes alone;
Save thou a soul, and it shall save thy own!"[2]

ii. *Our Response.*

"Then I said, Here am I; send me."
Why is it not always made so heartily?

[1] See J. S. Mackenzie, *Manual of Ethics*, p. 450.
[2] Whittier, *The Two Rabbis*.

1. *We doubt if we have received the call.*

1. Are we in the place where we are likely to receive it? Preaching in Oxford, the Bishop of London said that the atmosphere of a university is unfavourable to the hearing of the call of need, whether from below or from above. It even makes men unfit to be trustworthy judges of moral and religious truth. "It is scarcely too much of a paradox to say, 'We most of us were in doubt, when we were undergraduates at Oxford.'" "I being in the way," said Abraham's servant, according to the Authorized translation, "I being in the way, the Lord led me."

¶ At the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny, Lord Clyde, better known as Sir Colin Campbell, when asked how long it would take him to get ready to start for India, is said to have replied: "I am ready now." Such is the spirit which breathes in the language of the text. The French motto, "Toujours prêt," and the Scotch, "Ready, aye ready," are excellent ones for the Christian soldier.[1]

2. Have we made it the subject of prayer?

¶ Lord Wolseley says in his *Soldier's Pocket Book* that if a young officer wishes to get on, he must volunteer for the most hazardous duties and take every possible chance of risking his life. It was a spirit and courage like that which was shown in the service of God by a good soldier of Jesus Christ named John Mackenzie, who died a few years ago. One evening, when he was a lad and eager for work in the Foreign Mission field, he knelt down at the foot of a tree in the Ladies' Walk, on the banks of the Lossie at Elgin, and offered up this prayer: "O Lord, send me to the darkest spot on earth." And God heard him, and sent him to South Africa, where he laboured for many years, first under the London Missionary Society, and then under the British Government, as the first Resident Commissioner among the natives of Bechuanaland.[2]

2. But *we are unfit.* What makes us unfit?

1. Is it sin? Isaiah was unfit until he was pardoned. That objection would be a real objection, and final, if there were no possibility of repentance and no probability of pardon. There is no doubt that it is sin, sin in some of its innumerable forms of selfishness—indolence, pride, worldliness, lust—that keeps most of us from accepting God's call. But the moment we

[1] C. Neil, in *The Clergyman's Magazine*, i. p. 96.
[2] J. O. Struthers, in *The Morning Watch*.

repent—"Lo! this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

2. Is it poverty of gift? So Moses: "Oh Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." So Jeremiah: "Ah, Lord God! behold: I cannot speak for I am a child." The excuse is often insincere. In these instances it was sincere enough, but more than a mistake. As the man who had but the one talent hid it and lost it, so it cost both Moses and Jeremiah something that they did not in fulness of faith rise at once to their opportunity.

¶ There is a famous physician in London to-day who tells that when he had finished his medical course in Edinburgh he was offered an appointment for which he felt himself unfit. He called on one of the professors. "You feel yourself unfit for it?" said the professor; "then you are the man for it." Paul was unfit: but "unto me was *this grace given*," he says, "that I should preach."

Observe, however, that there is *a connection between call and qualification.* It is not enough to have the volunteer spirit. A man might volunteer to be one of a lifeboat crew, and, from incapacity, might do more harm than good, might simply be in the way of others, and would be filling a position that might otherwise have been occupied by a more capable substitute. When a prime minister is forming his Cabinet, he does not throw open the positions to the whole Houses of Parliament, and say, Who will undertake the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer? who that of Foreign Secretary? and so on. No, he has in his mind's eye certain members whom he thinks best qualified, and he goes to them and invites them to join him. The call comes to the best qualified. When that call came to Isaiah, it seemed to be couched in general terms, and to mean, Who among mankind will go? But remember, it was only Isaiah, and not all mankind, that heard it; and though the question is put by God in a general sort of way, yet all that it meant was simply this, "Shall I send *you*? Will *you* go?"

3. Perhaps *the duty seems too hard.* Duty is always hard.

1. It would not be worth doing if it were not difficult to do. The mission upon which Isaiah was sent was hard enough

for any man. The late Lord Salisbury came back from Constantinople, in the old days of black disaster in the East, to tell us why he had failed to achieve a single reform. "The Turkish officials," he said, "simply have not the capacity to understand what we mean." It was just so with Isaiah's countrymen. They had lost the capacity to understand what he meant.

But however hard it is to go, it is harder *not* to go.

Idlers all day about the market-place
They name us, and our dumb lips answer not,
Bearing the bitter while our sloth's disgrace,
And our dark tasking whereof none may wot.

Oh, the fair slopes where the grape-gatherers go!
Not they the day's fierce heat and burden bear,
But we who on the market-stones drop slow
Our barren tears, while all the bright hours wear.

Lord of the Vineyard, whose dear word declares
Our one hour's labour as the day's shall be,
What coin divine can make our wage as theirs,
Who had the morning joy of work for Thee?

2. And there is a Promise with every Call. It is (1) a promise of *Pardon*, so that we may go unhindered by the guilt of sin. It is (2) a promise of *Purification*, so that we may go unhampered by the presence of sin. Tied to habits of evil we are as a ship fretting her sides against the wharf. She finds her true life when she has cut the cords that bind her to the wharf and is out upon the ocean with the winds over her and the waters under her. And the purification comes as we go. Ten lepers were cured by Christ. He simply spoke the word: "Go and shew yourselves unto the priests." They took Him at His word. "And it came to pass, that, *as they went*, they were cleansed." It is (3) a promise of *Power*. Few men were ever more unfit for the task laid on them than the Apostles, as they gathered in the Upper Room on the morning of Pentecost. But they were "endued with power." If we are willing and obedient, the power will not fail us. The going develops new powers within ourselves, possibly gifts and graces we were unconscious of possessing. In any case, as our days so shall our strength be.

For seven years Dr. Thomas Chalmers occupied a pulpit and preached with splendid eloquence before he had an experience

in his own soul of the renewing power of God. He has left on record the sad and humiliating testimony that his preaching during those years did not have "the weight of a feather on the morals of his parishioners." But there came a day when he was laid aside by illness. In this illness he saw the King, the Lord of hosts. In that vision he saw himself, and his heart was broken with contrition. The formal gave place to the vital, the professional to the real, and the whole man was transformed. He was as new a man as Isaiah was that day when he came out of the Temple. His health returned. He went back into his pulpit, and all Scotland was shaken.

¶ During the Indian Mutiny a small British host was encamped on the ridge outside Delhi. When the news of the Cawnpore massacres reached them, the general ordered his men to attack Delhi. The doctor inspected the invalided soldiers to ascertain how many of them were strong enough to carry arms. He passed by a sickly youth as being too frail, when the lad cried: "For God's sake, sir, don't say I am not fit for duty; it's only a touch of fever, and the sound of the bugle will make me well."

The Gift of a Son.

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THE GIFT OF A SON.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.—ix. 6.

THIS prophecy was delivered by Isaiah in the reign of Ahaz, either publicly, in the presence of the king, or else (as is more probable) privately, to his own immediate followers, henceforth to be spoken of as the believing Remnant. How much of the actual future it was given Isaiah to see, no one can say. It may be that he expected to see the beginning of such a reign within the limits of his own lifetime, just as St. Paul perhaps expected to be alive (1 Thess. iv. 15) at the Second Coming of our Lord. As a matter of fact, however, no child who could truly be described as in verse 6 was born until the birth of Jesus Christ. The day of Christ, in fact though not in all its circumstances, was shown to Isaiah in vision.

The subject is the Gift of a Son, and the obvious parts of it are (1) His Birth, (2) His Destination, and (3) His Name.

I.

HIS BIRTH.

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."

1. *A Child.*—Why was the Redeemer born? Why did He come as a child? Why was not an angel sent to redeem men? Why did not God appear in the fulness of His glory? Because (1) redemption must come from within. If a movement is to catch on, as the modern phrase is, it must be a movement from within the society. It was Luther the monk who became the reformer of Roman Catholicism. (2) The Redeemer must

be one of us in order to show what we may be. He is tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, that He may Himself become a faithful and merciful High Priest, with a true feeling for our infirmities, and that He may also be to us a true example. (3) He must be one towards whom we can have the feeling of family affection. The mother's love for her child must not be a hindrance to her love for her Saviour; they must be two streams flowing into one another, making one fuller and richer stream of love.

They all were looking for a king
To slay their foes, and lift them high.
Thou cam'st a little baby thing,
That made a woman cry.

¶ The possession of a child of one's own opens up the possibility of an entirely new world of experience, and therefore of an entirely fresh revelation of the First Author and Supreme Object of all experience. I think I have told you before what my first thought was when I caught sight of a little living, moving, grumbling thing, mouthing its fingers and rubbing its fists in its eyes, on the floor before the fire. It was as if the Father in heaven had fairly (if it is not irreverent to say so) shaken hands, offered me His hand, and said, "Thou art forgiven."[1]

2. This is the meaning of the phrase "unto us." As Isaiah used it, the phrase had a restricted meaning. Even when the fulfilment came, and the angels announced to the shepherds, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," it was still a Saviour for the people of Israel that was promised. But when the Saviour appeared men saw immediately that He could not be confined to Israel. Even the Samaritans recognised Him as the Saviour of the world.

Still, just as Isaiah's prophecy was made to the faithful Remnant in Israel, so the fulfilment is only to those who receive Him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

¶ On the centenary of the birth of George Stephenson there was an imposing demonstration at Newcastle. A vast procession filed through the town, carrying banners in honour of the great engineer. In the procession there was a band of men who carried a little

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*.

banner bearing the words, "He was one of us." They came from the little village of Wylam, where Stephenson was born, and were proud of him as having been one of themselves.

3. This child is a gift. In this lies the glory of the gospel. It is this that makes it a gospel. Not of works: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." And what does this gift of God carry with it? (1) A remedy for distress: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden"; (2) An example of new life: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"; (3) Power to make the example effective: "I can do all things in Christ who strengtheneth me."

¶ "Not only is He the Wisdom of God, in which the world was made—not only the Revelation of God, who lighteth every man—but also the Power of God, to arrest the flood of evil, to push back the merciless curse, to force open the bolted gates; the Power by which the strong Will of God enters into action upon the field of human history, and works mightily, thrusting its victorious way against all the weight of hostile principalities and unkindly powers. With power He comes from heaven that you who receive Him may have power to become, in His adoption, sons of God." [1]

II.

His Destination.

"The government shall be upon his shoulder."

He is to bear the burden of kingship. Accordingly, when the wise men came from the East, they came inquiring, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

1. Now these two, a child and a king, express the supreme desire of the ancient Israelites. The history of Abraham is the memorable example of the one, the history of Samuel of the other. The paradox of Jewish faith consisted in this, that it focused at once in a cradle and a throne. To meet Jewish aspiration, the Saviour had to be "born King."

2. Kingship is a burden. The government is to be laid upon His shoulder. The only crown that the Messiah visibly wore on earth was a crown of thorns.

3. But this king is competent. Not as Cromwell's son Richard who laid down the government which he was not fit to

[1] H. S. Holland, *Christ or Ecclesiastes*, p. 28.

carry. Can we trust Christ? Every question of this questioning age is running up into that. If He is God, the everlasting Son of the Father; if He has overcome the sharpness of death; if all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth, then we stand safe. We have not been mocked with cunningly devised fables. If it is not so, His claims and our hopes fall in a common and irretrievable ruin.

(1) On Him depends our deliverance from the past. Christ alone frees us from the past. We may seek to bury it; we may say—

> All that we two only know,
> I forgive and I forego;
> So thy face no more I meet
> In the field or in the street.

It pursues us nevertheless; and the longer the world lasts the consequences of sin are more clearly traced, insomuch that Christian preachers of the doctrine of forgiveness often timidly minimise it, and fail to show it as a really supernatural thing.

(2) On Him hangs all our hope for the future. A great change has come over thought on the subject of the immortality of the soul. There were many, almost within memory, who held fast to that, though they rejected the distinctive doctrines of Christianity. In the life of Reid, the great Scottish philosopher, there is a letter which puts this with striking force. All that is fast disappearing. Now we believe in immortality because we believe in Christ.

¶ In a little Perthshire town there was a minister of the Gospel whose name filled the district round like ointment poured forth. A Highland drover had occasionally to pass through this town. On one occasion he tarried over the Sabbath day and went to the church. He could not make much of a continuous English discourse. But at the end he heard the minister give out for singing a part of the 34th Psalm in the Scotch Version, of which the last verse is—

> Ill shall the wicked slay; laid waste
> Shall be who hate the just.
> The Lord redeems His servants' souls;
> None perish that Him trust.

He understood the last line, and he waited for the minister in the vestry. "Sir," he said, "you read from the Psalm Book, 'None

perish that Him trust.' Is that true?" The man's heart was opened. Often afterwards as he pursued his business and passed through the little town he went to see the minister. Locking hand in hand, the one or the other broke the silence by just saying, "None perish that Him trust."

When I was in my native place, I went to see an old pupil who was on his death-bed, and I told him the story. A few days after my visit he died; and his parents told me that many a time, when he thought no one was noticing, he was heard during these days softly murmuring to himself, "None perish that Him trust." He went into eternity leaning on that confidence.[1]

III.

His Name.

His name describes His character and work. It may be taken in four pairs of epithets.

1. *Wonderful, Counsellor.*—This means, says Skinner, either that He is a wonder of a counsellor, or else that He counsels wonderful things, according to the grammatical construction adopted. The meaning is the same as we find again in Isa. xxviii. 29, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." Now a counsellor does not counsel at random; he works according to a plan. This Child came with a definite plan—to seek and to save the lost. It was an offence then. It is an offence to the Pharisees still. But it has been wonderful in its working. To prove successful, however, it has to be tried. The Gospel of the grace of God has never failed with those who have put it to the proof; but it must be put to the proof.

¶ A gentleman once visited a great jewelry store, owned by a friend. His friend showed him magnificent diamonds, and other splendid stones. Amongst these stones his eye lighted on one that seemed quite lustreless, and pointing to it, he said, "That has no beauty at all." But his friend put it in the hollow of his hand, and shut his hand, and then in a few moments opened it again. What a surprise! The entire stone gleamed with all the splendours of the rainbow. "What have you done to it?" asked the astonished gazer. His friend answered, "This is an opal. It is

[1] Dr. Edmond, in *Christian World Pulpit*, ix. p. 145.

what we call the sympathetic jewel. It only needs to be gripped with the human hand to bring out its wonderful beauty." [1]

2. *Mighty God.*—"Unto us a child is born—Mighty God"; what a leap. How did Isaiah make it? Ask rather, How did Thomas make it? Is not this the carpenter? Is not this Jesus of Nazareth, and can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Yet Thomas, who knew all that, answered and said, "My Lord and my God." How did he know? How do we know still? We know from what He said, from what He did, from what He was, from what He is.

If Jesus Christ is a man—
And only a man—I say
That of all mankind I cleave to him,
And to him will cleave alway.

If Jesus Christ is a God—
And the only God—I swear
I will follow him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, the air.[2]

3. *Everlasting Father.*—If "Mighty God" was amazing, this is more amazing still. It may have been easier for Isaiah than it is for us. For do we not keep Father and Son distinct? But if they are distinct, they are yet one—I and the Father are one—they are one throughout all eternity. And to us the Son of the Father has all the attributes of Fatherhood. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord Jesus has compassion on the multitude. Isaiah's thought is very likely that He is to be more than king, that He is to be a father to His people, as the Russians call their Tsar "little father." He is to gather the lambs in His arm and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

4. *Prince of Peace.*—"Think not," said Christ, "that I came to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." And so it has been suggested that the idea of Christ as a Prince of Peace is due not to the Gospels, but to this passage and to Milton—

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began.

[1] A. C. Price. [2] R. W. Gilder.

But there is no contradiction between Isaiah and St. Matthew. The first evidence of the gift of the Child is the sword. It is evident enough even in His lifetime. And it will be evident as long as good and evil exist together in the world. An older prophecy even than Isaiah's said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." Christ came to make that enmity real, and to make it last until the evil should be overcome by the good.

He came as Prince of Peace to the Remnant, to His own; not to those who cry "Peace, peace," when there is no peace, but to those only who find peace through the blood of His Cross. In three ways He makes peace:—(1) By making God and man one in His Person—by becoming flesh and dwelling among us; (2) by making man and God one in His death; and (3) by reconciling man to man in His life. "Walk in newness of life," says the Apostle; and among the signs of it: "As far as in you lies live peaceably with all men."

¶ Peace, then, means something. It means something more than fine sentiment or sonorous generalities. It means the readiness to abide by the decisions of reason and common sense, instead of brute force. It means a disposition to avoid unnecessary causes of hostility. It means mutual courtesy. It means firm insistence upon one's own rights, but the recognition at the same time of others' rights, and straightforward readiness to respect them. Ten times more effective in the cause of peace than all the courts of arbitration which we can ever call together would be the spectacle of a great nation refusing, in its consciousness of strength, to be irritated by petty grievances, turning a deaf ear to the howlings of popular prejudice, and asking at the hand of sister nations, not sharp advantages, but only justice and right. Without this disposition, arbitration is neutralised and made ridiculous and unoperative at the start. With it, it becomes the virtual rooting out of war.[1]

[1] E. H. Hall.

The Child as Leader.

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The Child as Leader.

And a little child shall lead them.—xi. 6.

You will remember the context of this verse. Isaiah is drawing a picture of *redeemed nature.* Under the rule of the promised Prince of David's line, "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and"—as a charming finishing touch to the idyllic scene—"a little child shall lead them." I do not think that when Isaiah talks of bears and lions and reptiles, he means fierce and cruel and cunning men. When he talks of the beasts he means the beasts. The passage is a parallel to St. Paul's vision of a ransomed nature in the 8th chapter of Romans. And Isaiah does not wish to exterminate the wild animals, but to tame them. This is the more remarkable, because in countries where wild beasts abound they are not looked upon as "big game," but as dangerous enemies. After all, man is largely to blame for the wildness of the beasts. Darwin gives us pathetic instances of the trustfulness of wild animals towards man, until they come to know him. If ever man becomes sufficiently civilised to cease from the wanton destruction of animal life, the wild creatures will soon become his friends.

I.

1. How should a little child lead the savage wolf, the fierce leopard, the powerful and majestic lion? Even a man can hardly do that. Before he can tame them to his will, he must show himself strong as the lion, fierce as the leopard, cunning as the wolf. The beast-tamer is distinguished by a quick eye, a prompt punishing hand, a courage and self-possession that never

falter; and how should we look for these features and qualities in a child? We cannot expect them; we should be sorry to see them in any child we loved. But may not a child have other qualities quite as potent, and even more potent? Is brute force the only force by which even brutes are ruled? Surely not. Baby lies on the rug with dog and cat. He is not so strong or lithe or quick as they are, or even as you are. Yet he takes liberties with them which you cannot take,—and remember, the cat is of one blood with the leopard and the dog with the wolf. He lies upon them, rolls over them, treads on their sensitive feet, pulls them about by fur or hair; and yet by some wonderful instinct they recognise his innocence of ill-intention and respect it. Were *you* to inflict half the pain on them which he inflicts, they would soon let you know that they had teeth and claws; but they hardly ever turn on him. The little child leads them where he will, and pretty much *as* he will.

2. But when the prophet tells us that in the Kingdom of Christ a little child leads the wolf and the leopard and the lion, as well as the lamb and the kid and the calf, he cannot simply mean that an innocent babe may have more power over the brutes than a grown man. He also means, no doubt, that in proportion as Christ reigns on the earth the primal order will be restored; that men, reconciled to God and to each other, will also be at peace with all the forces of Nature, will rule over them, and bend to their service even those of them which are the most fierce, hostile, and untamable, and thus regain all, and more than all, that Adam lost.

3. We need not cling too closely to the literal words and circumstances. The leadership of the little child may represent for us those simplest principles and powers of life to which men are often so unwilling to submit, but in submission to which all the best life comes; in submission to which alone the complete life of man can ever come. The familiar interpretation, which takes the wild beasts as symbols of the savage passions of men, is a permissible application of the words of the prophet, though not a direct interpretation. If the simplicity, tenderness, and playfulness of the kid and the lamb rise to their highest expression in men, so also do the cunning and fierceness of the wolf and the

leopard. Taking them thus here, the prediction is that under the rule of Christ even the most unruly appetites, even the most cruel passions of humanity shall be chastened into harmony with its gentler attributes, and men shall be led along the path of peace, following in the footsteps of a little child.

¶ There is a certain valley in the North where a rude path, hardly distinguishable at the best of times, leads through dangerous moss-hags right across the centre of a morass. In rainy weather the track would be wholly obliterated but for the little footprints of a band of children who go to school that way. Many a traveller has found his path safely through the Slough of Despond by following in the children's footsteps.[1]

II.

What are the characteristics of a little child?

1. *Trustfulness.*—Every reasonable man has some general conception, more or less clearly realised, about the humanity of which he is a part. He either holds that mankind is trustworthy, with frequent flagrant exceptions of falseness and deceit; or else he holds that mankind is base and deceitful, with the occasional intrusion of an upright and honest man. If he holds the first idea, he will be wisely trustful; he will feel that the safest attitude towards men is confidence, combined with such a reasonable watchfulness as shall keep him from being a foolish and easy dupe. If he holds the other idea, he is suspicious, he distrusts everybody at the first meeting. The first is the attitude of youth. And I ask you to remember that practically no man has largely led or ruled the world without it. Christ Jesus had it perfectly. How gloriously He trusted men. The fervour of His terrible denunciations of the wicked gets its vividness from the background against which it stands of honour for and confidence in the soul of man. And the whole Bible, with its large, unguarded, unsuspicious utterance of God to man, laying itself open to a thousand misconceptions, always trusting itself cordially to men's wish to understand it—there could be nothing like the Bible, with its regal influence, to illustrate how all true leadership of men has for its first principle confidence in the men it tries to lead.

[1] J. Kelman, in *The Expository Times*, xvi. p. 544.

¶ "Can I go and help grandpa along the walk, mamma?"

"Help him!" laughed Guy, before mamma could answer. "Why, you're a little tot of a girl, Bertha, and grandpa is very tall. He's deaf as a post, too."

"Yes, dearie, you can go," said mamma, as quietly as though Guy had not said a word.

"And I can make him hear with my hand," smiled Bertha.[1]

2. *Goodness.*—This is the principle of absolute morality, the principle that the right is to be done simply because it is the right. "Honesty is the best policy," says experience, trying with laborious ingenuity to disguise its conscience in the robes of selfishness. "Honesty is right," says the child and the child-like community. There is room for the exercise of simple goodness; there is need for it. For it has come to this: that a man who, in a mixed company of practical men, debating what is profitable and what will pay, says quietly, "We must do this, whether it pays or not, for it is right," makes a stir run through the company as if a breath out of the fresh open heaven blew in through the suddenly opened window of a close and overheated room.

¶ When the news was brought to the Princess Victoria that her uncle was dead, and that she was no longer Princess but Queen—"I will be good," she said. What more could she have said, or better?

Just to be good,
This is enough—enough!
Oh, we who find sin's billows wild and rough,
Do we not feel how more than any gold
Would be the blameless life we led of old?
Ah! though we miss
All else but this,
To be good is enough.

It is enough—
Enough—just to be good!
To lift our hearts where they are understood;
To let the thirst for worldly power and place
Go unappeased; to smile back in God's face
With the glad lips our mother used to kiss.
Ah! though we miss
All else but this,
To be good is enough.

[1] A. Percival Hodgson, *Thoughts for the King's Children*, p. 192.

3. *Religion.*—This is the strongest power that our human nature can submit to. Yet the dominion of it is constantly pushed out of sight as men grow more complicated in their living and thinking. It is not that men are irreligious, though there are irreligious men. It is not that men are worldly, though there seem to be men who find their whole satisfaction here; who crawl over the mountains and the fields of the earth, like moles or lizards taking the colour of the ground they crawl on. It is that men are really religious and yet hide their religion from their fellows, never mentioning God's name aloud, never referring their life openly to Him in whose hands they know it lies. Heaven lies about us in our infancy. The child frankly and simply acknowledges God, sets Him openly on the throne over every act for every man to see. Let us go to God simply, freely, spontaneously, lovingly, as the bird goes to the nest, as the child goes to the mother.

III.

1. The religion of the child is not an unintellectual religion. The truly cultivated man has the first healthy instincts of humanity developed and enriched by all his culture, but not altered in their character, made on the contrary all the more truly themselves, as their character has been brought out. The love of God should be stronger in the man of true culture than in the savage. Says Professor Inge, "In a very fascinating mediæval religious book, which I have tried to make better known, the *Revelations of Julian of Norwich*, the wise and saintly authoress says, 'To me was shown no higher stature than childhood.' Not, of course, that we should remain children in understanding; not that when we have become men, we should refuse to put away childish things; but that there should remain much of the child-character in us to the end."

2. And the religion of the child with all its simplicity is a religion which retains the mystery. Most good men would admit that in the hour when they have stood nearest to the unveiled heart of God, when with reverent wonder they have looked into the unknown depths of His infinite affection, they have been led to that holy place by the hand of a little child.

In the deepest reaches of His glorious life God is ever a mystery to us all.

They say that God lives very high:
  But if you look above the pines
You cannot see our God; and why?

And if you dig down in the mines
  You never see Him in the gold;
Though from Him all that's glory shines.

God is so good, He wears a fold
  Of heaven and earth across His face—
Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

But still I feel that His embrace
  Slides down by thrills, through all things made,
Through sight and sound of every place.

As if my tender mother laid
  On my shut lids her kisses' pressure,
Half waking me at night, and said
"Who kissed you through the dark, dear guesser?"[1]

3. It is only the child that is acceptable to God. It is only those who turn and become as little children that enter the Kingdom. "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish"—that is the great encouragement of all who turn.

I was in heaven one day when all the prayers
Came in, and angels bore them up the stairs
    Unto a place where he
    Who was ordained such ministry
Should sort them so that in that palace bright
The presence-chamber might be duly dight;
For they were like to flowers of various bloom;
And a divinest fragrance filled the room.

Then did I see how the great sorter chose
One flower that seemed to me a hedgling rose,
    And from the tangled press
    Of that irregular loveliness
Set it apart! and—"This," I heard him say,
"Is for the Master"; so upon his way
He would have passed; then I to him:
"Whence is this rose, O thou of cherubim
The chiefest?" "Knowest thou not?" he said, and smiled:
"This is the first prayer of a little child."[2]

[1] Mrs. Browning, *A Child's Thought of God*. [2] T. E. Brown.

The Wells of Salvation.

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The Wells of Salvation.

Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.—xii. 3.

This verse is taken from the Psalm of Redemption. It is welcome as a song in the night, full of charm, full of suggestion. It thrills the heart with the joy of a great discovery, the rapture of a great triumph. It is all the more welcome because of its startling contrast with the lurid and dreadful passages, full of condemnation and human catastrophe, which precede it. As you read you seem to stand in the pathway of storm, earthquake, and ruin. The fountains of the great deep are broken up. Panic seizes upon the soul. There seems to be no escape, as the prophet lays upon the conscience the awful burden of the wrath of God. The wrath of God! We do not talk much of it now, yet it is an eternal factor in the government of human life, and in the shaping of human destiny. Let us not bind ourselves with mock comforting. Then the prophet breaks into this psalm. He bids us come from Sinai's stern heights to Calvary's gentler slopes.

The text looks two ways. It looks backwards to an event which happened seven hundred and fifty years before Isaiah lived; and it looks forwards to an event which happened seven hundred and fifty years after Isaiah died.

The verse immediately preceding is quoted from the song which Moses and the Children of Israel sang after the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. xv. 2). Very soon after that event "they came to Elim, where were twelve springs of water, and three score and ten palm trees; and they encamped there by the waters" (Ex. xv. 27). The text may be safely understood as a reference to these twelve springs of water. In course of time there grew up the custom among the Israelites of keeping a feast in memory

of these wilderness experiences, which was called the Feast of Tabernacles. The whole nation left their homes and resided for an entire week in booths or tents made of the green leaves and goodly branches of the palm tree. It was a feast of joy, for it was also associated with the ingathering of the year's produce of corn and wine and oil. On the last day of the feast, its great day, the priests were accustomed to form a procession, arrayed in the white robes of their office. The Temple band marched in front, and to the sound of the timbrel and the note of the silver trumpet, they passed through the Water Gate, down the magnificent flight of steps, round the terrace, and along the rocky slopes of the hill of Zion, till they reached the pool of Siloam. Each separate priest produced a golden vase, and, stooping down, filled it from the quiet pool, lifted it upon his shoulder and fell back into rank. To the march of music the procession returned to the Temple and formed a circle round the altar. As each priest emptied his golden vase upon the sacrifice, the Levites chanted the words, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

One day, at the conclusion of this ceremony, Jesus stepped out of the crowd which filled the Temple courts, and stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

I.

What is Salvation?

Salvation is three things; and it needs all the three to make it complete.

1. It is Escape. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." It is escape from that curse. "Christ hath delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee. It is a hiding-place from the storm.

2. It is Deliverance. It is not only escape from the penalty of sin, it is escape from the sin itself. If a drunkard falls asleep

in the street on a cold night in winter he is in danger of death from exposure. Rouse him and take him home, and you rescue him from the penalty of his drunkenness. But you do a greater thing for him than that if you persuade him to sign the pledge and deliver him from his drinking habit.

¶ One of the true histories of conversion which Mr. Harold Begbie writes in his book, entitled *Broken Earthenware*, is the history of "Old Born Drunk." He was "a true Miserable, lower than anything to be found among barbarous nations, debased almost out of humanity." Brought to a meeting, he heard some one "testify." "While I was listening to Joe," he said, "thinking of what he's been, and seeing what he's become, all of a sudden it took me that I'd find God and get Him to make me like Joe. It took me like that. I just felt, all of a sudden, determined to find God." "*Determined*," he repeated, with energy astonishing in this broken and hopeless creature of alcoholism. He tasted drink no more. "God has taken all the desire for it," he explained, "clean away from me."

3. It is Endowment. This is the positive side of salvation. Besides escape from the penalty, besides deliverance from the tyranny of sin, there is the gift of holiness. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart. The sinner walks in newness of life. The endowment is in one word the Holy Spirit. Then the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and all the rest of the gifts of grace.

¶ For thirteen years I preached to my beloved people at Newcastle. I gave them upwards of two thousand sermons on salvation—for I never preach about anything else. I went back the other night to preach to my own folk, and as I went up the pulpit steps I was overwhelmed with the thought, not that it was difficult to find anything new to say, but with the thought that I had left so much unsaid.[1]

II.

The Wells of Salvation.

1. The use of water as a figure for salvation is most appropriate. For water is not merely a refreshing luxury, it is a necessity of existence. In the East it is felt to be a necessity every day. As a consequence, in the gradual conquest of the

[1] A. T. Guttery, in *Christian World Pulpit*, lxxvii. p. 69.

land of Canaan, the question of possessing and holding the wells, the places of drawing water, was of especial importance. To hold the wells was to hold the keys of the position; it was, in fact, to subdue and hold the country.

2. It is appropriate, further, because in the East, however it may be in the West, water is recognised as the gift of God. Listen to the water-seller passing through the streets of Cairo or Alexandria with his water-skins. What is his cry? It is not "Water, water," it is "The gift of God, the gift of God."

¶ Though, when in the midst of the desert and surrounded by blinding white sand-dunes, the very idea of water seems absurd, and its existence impossibly remote, yet it is often present at a distance of only a few yards underfoot. This secret reservoir—so tantalisingly close, so difficult of attainment—of what in the desert are veritably the waters of life, is a phenomenon which has always haunted the Arab imagination, and has expressed itself in all kinds of legends and quaint theories and explanations. One tradition relates, what was no doubt the case, that the earliest oases grew round springs of naturally flowing water. These in time became gradually exhausted, and on this happening the Marabouts, or priests, confronted with a danger that menaced the existence of the tribes, united in offering up solemn prayers to the Almighty for guidance. It was in answer to these prayers that the existence of the underground supply of water was revealed, and the idea of tapping it by boring wells was suggested as a direct inspiration from heaven.[1]

3. What, then, are the wells or springs of salvation? Let the psalmist answer: "All my springs are in thee" (Ps. lxxxvii. 7). But Isaiah himself is very clear. In the verse immediately before the text he says: "Behold, God is my salvation." God Himself is the well of salvation, and there is none beside. But God is infinite variety as well as inexhaustible fulness. All the springs from which salvation in any measure and in any form flows to the thirsty lips of men are in God Himself.

But, God being the true fountain of salvation, notice that Jesus Christ plainly and decisively puts Himself in the place that belongs to God: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Think of the extraordinary claims involved in that invitation. Here is a man who plants Himself over against the whole of the human race, and professes that He can

[1] L. March Phillips, *In the Desert*, p. 166.

satisfy every thirst of every soul through all the ages. Every craving of heart and mind, all longings for love and wisdom, for purity and joy, for strength and guidance, He assumes to be able to slake by the gift of Himself. Moses sinned when He said, "Must *we* fetch water out of this rock?" and expiated that sin by death. But his presumption was modesty compared with the unheard-of assumptions of the "meek and lowly" Christ. There is but one hypothesis by which the character of Jesus can be saved, if He ever said anything like these words—and that is that He who speaks them is God manifest in the flesh, the everlasting Son of the Father.

Isaiah refers to the Song of Moses and says, "The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." Then St. Paul comes and interprets Isaiah and says, "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink, and live":
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

III.

The Drawing of Water.

How are we to draw water from the wells of salvation?

1. By Prayer. And prayer is asking. To the Samaritan woman Jesus said, "Thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Prayer is coming. To the crowds in the Temple He said, "Let him come unto me, and drink." Prayer is believing. To the listeners by the Sea of Galilee He said, "He that believeth on me shall never thirst."

2. By the Word and Sacraments. "The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption are His ordinances, especially the word, sacra-

ments and prayer." How the Word and Prayer are associated Dr. Whyte shows by quoting from M'Cheyne's *Letter to a Boy.* "You read your Bible regularly, of course; but do try to understand it, and still more to *feel* it. Read more parts than one at a time. For example, if you are reading Genesis, read a Psalm also; or if you are reading Matthew, read a small bit of an Epistle also. *Turn the Bible into Prayer.*" And how the Word and the Sacraments agree together he shows by quoting the old Scotch preacher, Bruce. "It wald be speered, Quherefore are sacraments annexed, seeing we gat na mair in the sacrament nor we get in the word? Thy hart cannot wist nor imagine a greater gift nor to have the Sonne of God, quha is King of heaven and earth. And, therefore, I say, quhat new thing wald thou have? The sacrament is appointed that we may get a better grip of Christ nor we get in the simple word. The sacraments are appointed that I might have Him mair fullie in my saul; that He might make the better residence in me. This, na doubt, is the cause quherefore thir seales are annexed to the evident of the simple word."

The Samaritan woman said, "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." But she was altogether mistaken. For as long as we are in the body we will thirst. And the oftener we have been at the ordinances before, drawing water, the greater will be our longing to come again. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing" (Ps. cxxvi. 1, 2).

Why? Because once more they would have the opportunity of ascending the hill of Zion for God's worship. It was because he had been there before that the psalmist said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (cxxii. 1).

¶ Many years ago some skylarks were liberated on Long Island, and they became established there, and may now occasionally be heard in certain localities. One summer day a lover of birds journeyed out from the city in order to observe them. A lark was soaring and singing in the sky above him. An old Irishman came along and suddenly stopped as if transfixed to the spot. A look of mingled delight and incredulity came into his face. Was he indeed hearing the bird of his youth? He took off his hat and

turned his face skyward, and with moving lips and streaming eyes stood a long time regarding the bird. "Ah," thought the student of science, "if I could only hear that song with his ears!" To the man of science it was only a bird-song to be critically compared with a score of others, but to the other it brought back his youth and all those long-gone days on his native hills.[1]

IV.

With Joy.

1. The discovery of the well is an occasion of joy. Professor William James defines conversion. His definition is a conclusion drawn from the experience of a multitude of persons who had been converted. This is his definition: "Conversion is the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified, and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities."[2] The Philippian jailer "rejoiced in God, believing with all his house."

¶ The opening of a well is a time of rejoicing. "The night is passed in dancing and festivity. A goat is sacrificed at the mouth of the well. The Sheyks and Marabouts of Tamerna, and the leading men of the neighbouring villages, gather round it to recite their prayers. The musicians of Tuggurt and Temacin range themselves in the midst. The young girls surround them dancing. The men, according to their wont, fire their guns in the air. All the inhabitants give themselves up to a manifestation of triumph and delight, such as only those, perhaps, who are acquainted by experience with what the word water means in the desert can understand."[3]

2. And every time that we come hither to draw is a time of rejoicing, until the Christian character becomes a character of joy. Phillips Brooks points out that there is often a buoyancy and freshness in indifferent, unregenerate and thoughtless people which may be woefully lacking in intelligent, conscientious and patient men. The intelligent man turns into a pedant, the conscientious man turns into a drudge, the patient man grovels

[1] L. A. Banks, in *Homiletic Review*, xxxix. p. 337.
[2] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 189.
[3] L. March Phillips, *In the Desert*, p. 137.

like a worm. We look for the interest of life, he says, not from them but from their opposites, from the man who owns no rigid service to duty and who lightly tosses off all his burdens. What is wanting? Is it more levity? No, he says, it is more profoundness. Is it less seriousness? No, it is more. These people are too good for the life of butterflies, but the secret of their dreariness is that they are still not good enough. They have not reached the central seriousness of living, wherein is joy and brightness and perpetual enthusiasm.

What of the Night?

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What of the Night?

The burden of Dumah. One calleth unto me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said: The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: turn ye, come.—xxi. 11, 12.

I.

The Oracle of Dumah.

1. *The Situation.*

1. "Abrupt in form, enigmatical in meaning, this oracle has nevertheless a certain grandeur and sublimity even for those to whom its sense is obscure." So says Samuel Cox, introducing one of the best sermons ever preached upon it. And he proceeds to recall Mendelssohn's use of the oracle: "He who has heard Mendelssohn's 'Hymn of Praise' has at least one proof of its power to excite the imagination and rouse emotion. In that fine work of art, the tenor soloist demands, in sharp, ascending minors, 'Watchman, will the night soon pass?' and replies, 'Though the morning come, the night will come also.' The demand is thrice repeated in the same sequence of notes, but each time it is raised a whole tone in the scale, to denote the growing intensity and urgency of the inquirer; thrice the answer is given in the same sequence, but for the sake of added emphasis it also is raised a tone the second time; while in reply to the third repetition of the inquirer, the soprano breaks in with the joyful proclamation, 'The night is departing,' and the chorus take up and swell and prolong the glad news. As we listen, we feel that the music, splendid as it is in itself, owes no little of its sublimity to the splendid dramatic force of the words to which it is set."[1]

2. The key to the passage is to be found in its historical cir-

[1] S. Cox, *An Expositor's Note Book*, p. 201.

cumstances. The period was that of the Assyrian oppression, an oppression which not only harassed and depeopled Judah, but affected the nations around. Sharing in their neighbour's sin, these nations shared in their neighbour's punishment, and, like the primary sufferer, were downcast and desponding, asking wearily and anxiously, "How long?" One by one they present themselves to the prophet's vision—Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Ethiopia, Egypt, Arabia; and now he is speaking of Edom, or, as it is here called, "Dumah," Judah's nearest neighbour as well as its oldest and most inveterate foe. "The burden of Dumah," he says, "What I have to say concerning its present state, what I have to say concerning its future destiny."

3. The prophet is standing in vision on the border. He has planted himself on the ridge between Judah and Edom—night to right of him, night to left of him; night on the dwellings of Judah, night on the dwellings of Edom, Judah's ancient foe; the same pall of darkness hangs low over both. And as he waits, the stillness is broken by a solitary cry. It is the voice of some unseen inquirer—not, you observe, in Judah, but in Edom. "Watchman, what of the night?" he says. "Is it nearly over? Are there any streaks of light yet? Do you see the morning star?" And the watchman answers cautiously. He does not commit himself. "I will tell you this much," he says, "The morning cometh, and also the night."

¶ Among the many offices that have become obsolete, during the advance of modern civilisation, may be counted that of the watchman. In ancient times, however, the office was considered absolutely necessary for the maintenance of order and safety in towns and cities. It was the watchman's duty to patrol the streets during the night, to prevent thieves and vagabonds prowling about in the dark. It was his duty to sound the alarm in case of imminent danger. It was his duty to announce the hour, and state the various changes in the weather. Those who listened to his firm, steady, regular step, as he passed their doors, felt a sense of security, and cast themselves with confidence into the arms of sleep. At the entrance of the cities, towers were not infrequently erected, and these were called "watch-towers," in which watchmen were regularly posted, whose eyes ever swept the distant horizon, to see if anybody was coming, of whom it was necessary to give information.[1]

[1] D. Rowlands, in *The Cross and the Dice-Box*, p. 217.

2. *The Question.*

1. The question to the watchman, "What of the night?" means, What part of the night is it now? Is it the first, the second, or the third watch? Will the light soon dawn? The A.V. translation, says Dr. G. A. Smith,[1] though picturesque, is misleading. The voice does not inquire, "What of the night?" *i.e.* whether it be fair or foul weather, but "How much of the night is passed?" literally "What from off the night?" This brings out a pathos that our English version has disguised. Edom feels that her night is lasting terribly long.

2. It is worth while to point out—for the quality of poetry depends on such minute touches of art—that the sentinel not only repeats his question, but repeats it in an abbreviated form. "Watchman, *how far is it in* the night? Watchman, *how far in* the night?" expresses in English the Hebrew abbreviation, though in the Hebrew it is much more telling. And both the repetition of the question and the more brief and winged form of the question on the second utterance of it indicate the extreme urgency of the inquiry, the extreme haste and impatience of the inquirer.

3. The word Dumah means "silence," "the land of silent desolation." It is a very suggestive thought. Sin is the great silencer. The end of sin is silence. Assuredly that was true in the case of Edom. It was true of it at the time when the prophet spoke, it was to be true of it still more completely in the ages to follow. Travellers tell us that if we want to know how Providence can turn a fruitful land into barrenness, and make a defenced city a heap, for the iniquity of the inhabitants thereof, we have only to look at Edom, with its hills and plains picked clean of every vestige of vegetation, and its ruined palaces, once the home of busy men, now the haunt of vultures and the lair of scorpions, all human sound gone—the voice of mirth, the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, the voice of the bride!

4. Of course we are not to take Isaiah's words literally. No voice, no sound, could reach from Mount Seir to Mount Zion. Nor are we to suppose that the Edomites dispatched an

[1] *The Book of Isaiah*, p. 276.

embassy to the prophet at Jerusalem to inquire of him concerning the future fate of Edom. Isaiah was a poet, and describes in a dramatic form the thoughts and questions which rose in his soul as he looked through the ages, and the shadows of coming events passed before him. He had already seen that the Babylonians would conquer Jerusalem; and that they, in their turn, would be conquered by the Persians. But when the Babylonians came against Jerusalem, *the Edomites* would join them in despoiling the city and slaying its inhabitants. If the Babylonians were to be judged for their sin against Israel and the God of Israel, were the Edomites, who had shared their sin, to escape their judgment?

3. *The Answer.*

The answer is not clear to us now. Perhaps we do not know all the circumstances quite intimately enough. Perhaps it is purposely made enigmatical, as was often the case with an oracle. Perhaps the answer was not clear to the prophet himself. Cox thinks that the prophet, dismissing the Edomite inquirer with a prediction so gloomy, felt some compunction. He cannot see beyond the night; yet the night may have a morning beyond it. Let the inquirer return, therefore, and repeat his inquiries. The prophet hopes he will. He reiterates the invitation. He makes it more warm and urgent. "If ye will inquire, ye may," turns into the entreaty "return, come again." Davies understands that the Edomite was answered with the promise of alternations of dawning day and darkening night. The Assyrians, Persians, Chaldeans, Greeks, Romans, Muhammadans would in turn oppress them, and between each oppression there would be but a ray of hope. Perhaps the brightest dawn to them would be the ascendancy of the Herods; but even that would so soon culminate in a darker night.

II.

Its Modern Use.

i. *The Heart's Cry to God.*

It is the cry of the human heart to God. How often do the heavens seem pitiless, and send no answer to our impassioned

appeal, but "Morning cometh, and also night." However sad we are, however racked with suspense, though we have lost the friends we most loved, or apprehend the ill we most fear, the sun shines on, the birds sing, our friends eat and drink and are merry, we have to do our work, to take our food, to talk and smile, to listen to condolences, to endure remonstrance, to go through the whole daily round as though nothing had happened to us. And when the day is over, the night comes, and we have to lie down on a couch which has no rest for us, to drag through the slow weary hours, and long for the morning. At such times, in such moods, our life grows very dark to us. Nature seems to have no sympathy with us; friends and neighbours cannot even understand what our grief is like; our duties are burdensome to us, pleasure even more burdensome than duty. The strain is heavier than we can endure; it seems impossible that we should struggle on long under a burden so heavy. And yet the future holds out no hope to us but death. A few faint, watery gleams of brightness, and then the great darkness will rush down upon us, the night that has no end.

¶ Apart from such special eclipses, times when the darkness thickens, there is the universal and permanent shadow that broods over all, the shadow of this enigmatic and mysterious life. I mean the shadow to which the poet refers when he writes—

> So runs my dream: but what am I?
> An infant crying in the night:
> An infant crying for the light:
> And with no language but a cry.

I mean the shadow of which a great Christian thinker spoke when, after a conversation with a friend on the deepest problems of life and death, he wound up the interview with the words: "Ah! think now of the great God looking down on our babblings in the dark!" We are compassed with mystery. The sky is heavy with it, the heart is oppressed with it. Life has its mysteries. Truth has its mysteries.[1]

ii. *The World's Cry to the Church.*

It is the cry of the world to the Church. The voice comes from Seir. It comes from the men and women of the world. It is addressed to God's watchman on Mount Zion It

[1] W. A. Gray.

is the cry of the world to the Church of God. Notice first the great variety there is in the manner of the cry, and then the fact of it.

1. *The manner of it.*

(1) Sometimes it is no more than a question of utter carelessness. There are those who haunt our churches from the indolence of habit, who smilingly confess themselves "sinners" without once remembering the tremendous import of the words they employ; who echo the thrilling penitence of our liturgy in the same tone that inquires the news of the day; who are Christians because their fathers were, and would, without a murmur, be heathens for the same reason.

(2) Sometimes it is the question of the merely curious. Most Christian teachers are familiar with a class of inquirers who, without much sympathy with evangelical verities, sometimes without much attention to moral demands, are greatly taken up with speculative difficulties. They want the mist cleared away from this point, they want the uncertainty banished from that. The consistency of God's sovereignty with man's responsibility, the nature and occupation of the unseen world, the destiny of the heathen, the fulfilment of prophecy, the order of the last things—that whole class of interesting but not always practical subjects on which a veil of uncertainty hangs, attracts them much. And they turn in curiosity to the Church, with their appeals to the Church's wisdom, their demands for the Church's opinion.

(3) Sometimes the question is ironical, or even contemptuous. "How goes the task with you?" says the world. "With all your money and with all your machinery, what have you to show? How many converted heathens? How many converted Jews? What reduction is there in the statistics of immorality? What increase in church attendance among the working classes? Watchman, what of the night?"

(4) But sometimes it is earnest. Not in any light or trifling spirit, but with a deep sense of perplexity, and an honest desire for help, men turn inquiringly to the Church—at times even in anguish of heart. The agonies of remorse have seized their spirit. The night has come down upon them in exceeding great darkness. Conscience suggests retribution; they ask if revelation confirms it.

(5) And sometimes it is undefined and inarticulate, and then it is the saddest cry of all. This is the cry from Seir. The true translation is "*one* calleth unto me out of Seir." It is the utterance of a poor heartbroken weary community; one voice attempting to utter the need, the yearning, the longing of many hearts.

¶ Mr. C. T. Studd once told me a cry of anguish which he heard in China, and which has haunted him ever since. He was negotiating in a Chinese dwelling for the tenancy of a building for an opium refuge. While the negotiations were in progress, he and Mrs. Studd were horrified at a series of piercing shrieks which fell upon their ears. They evidently came from a little girl, and knowing how dangerous it was to interfere in anyone else's business, they at first disregarded the cries, which were agonising in their character. At last they could bear it no longer, and determined, whatever the consequences, to find out whence the cries proceeded; they followed the sound until they found themselves in a room, where, forcibly held on a rude bed, was a little girl, from whose feet the cruel bandages used in the process of foot-binding were being stripped. One woman held her down by her little arms; another was tearing the bandages from the poor feet; while a third was beating the child with a heavy stick, to divert the pain to other parts of the body, and to punish the little one for her cries. Those cries were heard by a sympathetic man, but there are thousands which are heard only by a sympathetic God. How can we, who have children of our own, be indifferent to the wail of these little ones, into whose cries we may read the agonising question, "Will the night never pass away?"[1]

¶ "He who has seen the misery of man only," Victor Hugo tells us, "has seen nothing, he must see the misery of a woman; he who has seen the misery of a woman only, has seen nothing, he must see the misery of childhood."

2. *The fact of it.* Three things are to be observed here.

(1) When night hangs heavily on the Church, it hangs still more heavily on the world. The Assyrian oppression lay like a cloud on Judah, but in lying on Judah it projected a still heavier cloud upon Edom. We take Judah (as we are bound to do) as a type of the Kingdom of God, and we take Edom (as we are also bound to do) as a type of the kingdoms of sense and sin; and the lesson to be first noted is this, that whatsoever casts a

[1] J. Gregory Mantle.

gloom on the one casts the same gloom or a deeper gloom on the other. There never was a greater mistake than to suppose that, because Christianity is bound up with problems, the abandonment of belief is the abandonment of mystery, mystery will meet you still. Do you get rid of the mystery of human sin, or of human pain, or of human inequalities, or of human death, or of any one of those great and pressing perplexities that make existence a puzzle, our belief in the kindness and righteousness of Providence hard? No, you do not. But you get rid of the one fund of hope that can soften these mysteries, the one source of light that can brighten them.

(2) In the midst of this common night there is the significant fact that the world does turn to the Church. It is very suggestive that in the general pressure of the general gloom the Edomite is represented as appealing to the Jew—a votary of the Jewish worship, a representative of the Jewish God. Was there none to consult nearer home? Where were the seers of Idumæa? No doubt there were seers in abundance, necromancers, astrologers, wizards that peeped and muttered. But it is not to these that the questioner turns. He looks away from them all to yonder lonely man on the serrated ridge, clad in camel-skin, now standing still, now pacing backwards and forwards, as he swept the cloud-hung horizon with his eye. It is from him the Edomite expects the oracle. It is on him he depends for the truth. "Watchman," he says, "prophet of Israel's race, servant of Israel's God, what of the night?" Through all ages the principle is the same. Ever, in the midst of the cloud that surrounds us all, the world puts its questions to the Church. It puts them to the Church's representatives, puts them to the Church's ministers. We have no more significant testimony to the place which God gives to the witnesses of religion than the way, friendly or unfriendly as the case may be, in which those most removed from their habits and thoughts continually ask their opinion. They are the mark of perpetual notice. They are the subjects of unceasing examination. The question, "Watchman, what of the night?" is raised in a variety of forms, comes through a variety of channels. But there it is, and those applied to must take account of it and face it.

(3) The Church must be ready with some answer. Has the

Church an answer to give? It has. The Church is the watchman standing on the tower to look into and ascertain the nature of the world's night. That, when you come to examine it, gives us a very wide range, perhaps wider than we sometimes think. For what would we include in the night—the world's night? First of all, unquestionably and fundamentally, the world's sin, the world's alienation from God, the world's wandering from holiness and purity and truth, the world's rejection of the Divine Spirit in its beneficent and soul-healing power. But that is the starting-point. By the world's night you must understand all its need, all its heart-breaking, all the problems that weary, harass, and perplex the brain of man, all the tears it is shedding, all the burdens it is bearing, all the sorrows it is enduring, all its chaos, all its discomfort, all its failure, all its darkness. That is the world's night; and the Christian Church has to do with all of it. And more than that, I say this, that it is the Christian Church, as I have defined it, and that alone, that is competent to understand the meaning of it, to look into the nature of it. And if a remedy is to be found for it at all, it must be found in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ; it must be found by the watchman that has been set upon the tower to note the progress of the night, and to declare the passing away of the darkness. It is only the spirit that rules the Church, or should rule it, that can see clearly into the night.

The Church has an answer, but it is not always ready to give it. The Church is sometimes taken aback by the world's moral or religious questions, because it does not appreciate the world's moral or religious difficulties.

Sad, were the question to go up from Edom, "Watchman, what of the night?" and the answer to come back from Judah, "'Night,' did you say? we are scarcely aware that there is a night!" With one class, that, then, is the reason of the absence of reply—want of perception of the difficulty. And for another class, the reason may be that, while feeling the pressure of the difficulty, they have not obtained a solution for themselves. That is just as sad. Sad, were outsiders to appeal to us, doubting and looking to us for faith, ignorant and looking to us for knowledge, to find that the faith and knowledge they

look for are absent—never truly possessed, or if once in a fashion possessed, now well-nigh vanished. Sad, we say, were the question to arise from Edom, "Watchman, what of the night?" and the answer from Judah to be this, "The truth is, we are brothers in blindness; in spite of position, in spite of profession, we know as little as yourselves."

iii. *The Answer of the Church.*

The answer of the Church is twofold.

1. Throughout her history there have been both night and morning. There is a rhythm everywhere here on earth. Things vary and alternate. We have day and night, summer and winter; we sleep and we wake, we have youth and age, we live and die. Tides ebb and flow; moons wax and wane; the flowers have yearly their resurrection and their death. "The morning cometh and also the night."

Nations rise and fall. Greece cultivates the garden, and Rome breaks down all her hedges; Rome builds walls, and the Goth scales them; patriots purchase liberty, and by and by the people throw their liberty away. And thus, in human history, the continual variation and alternation go on. "The morning cometh and also the night."

The Church goes down into Egypt, and she is ransomed; again, she is bound with fetters and borne to Babylon. She has palmy days, and then days of adversity. She knows revival, and soon reaction and depression follow. Her Reformation grows to rationalism, her noblest Puritanism to prudishness and politics. The church of the parish falls cold and dead, and the chapels become the centres of spiritual light and life; anon the chapel is made the club-house of petty interests in the village, and life and work revive in the church. The dawn of civilisation seems to break on heathen Africa when the pioneer missionary touches its shore, and ere long civilisation casts darker shadows there than those of heathendom's midnight. So true it is that "The morning cometh and also the night"!

2. Yet the night is far spent and the day is at hand. Many forms of wrong, cruelty, and vice are impossible now which were possible and even common before the Son of God

and Son of Man dwelt among us; nay, even before the Reformation carried through Europe a light by which such deeds of darkness were reproved. The individual man may stand little higher, whether in wisdom or in goodness, than of old; but the number of men capable of high thoughts, noble aims, and lives devoted to the service of truth and righteousness, is incomparably larger. The world took long to make, and may take still longer to remake; but its re-creation in the image of God is just as certain as its creation.

(1) We see the approach of the day in matters of faith. There never was a time in human history when men were so loyal to the landmarks of truth. There never was a time when the blessed Bible was entrenched in so many faithful hearts. True, there are controversies. God be praised! The worst that can ever befall the Christian Church is stagnation. The Kingdom of God is not likely to suffer from any investigation of its truth. To be sure, there are heretics and schismatics. They perish by the way and their work serves to strengthen the battlements of truth, as coral insects toiling in unknown depths leave their bones as a contribution to the continents of coming ages. The truth had never so many stalwart friends as it has this day.

(2) We see it in social and ethical life. Ideals are higher than ever. Character means more. The character of Jesus stands out more distinctly as the Exemplar of morals. His incomparable portrait is the touchstone of character. More is expected of men than ever before in human history. More is expected of kings, of politicians, of merchants, of the average man. Compare the dignitaries of our time with those of a few centuries ago: Queen Victoria with Elizabeth, the President of the French Republic with Louis the Grand, Gladstone with Machiavelli, President Harrison with our continental governors, the citizen, the country gentleman, the ordinary church-goer or the non-church-goer, with those of a hundred years ago. I say ideals are higher and men more eager in striving after them. There is more respect for common honesty, for chastity and temperance, for benevolence. Many of the vices that were common have disappeared from public view.

(3) And we see it in the coming of the Kingdom. It was

but a hundred years ago that William Carey sat in his cobbler shop in Northamptonshire, his attention divided between the lapstone on his knee and a map of the world hanging on the wall. He said, "There is gold to be mined in India. I will go down after it if you will hold the ropes." He sailed for that pagan land a hundred years ago, went down into the mine, and souls have been responding to that deed of consecration, born out of Carey's travail, in countless multitudes—gold minted in the heavenly treasury and stamped with the image and superscription of our King! Oh, friends, everything is going right. The nations of the earth are coming unto our God. "Watchman, what of the night?" There is no night. The darkness is past and gone, the Sun of Righteousness hath risen with healing in His beams! Be glad and rejoice, O people of God; the sun shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day![1]

[1] D. J. Burrell.

In the Desert.

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In the Desert.

A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.—xxxii. 2.

The situation is to be understood by the reading of the previous chapter, from which this chapter should not be separated. The kingdom of Judah is threatened by Assyria. Hezekiah stands in great danger from Sennacherib. Suddenly Sennacherib is defeated, routed, and returns to his own land. It is the hand of the Lord that has done it. Now Isaiah looks forward to the future and sees Judah, thus miraculously delivered from a situation of extreme peril, recovering herself morally, king, princes, and people vying with one another in doing righteously. First, the king shall reign in righteousness, next, the princes shall rule in judgment. Then (xxxii. 2) the great men of the kingdom shall become the strength and stay of the nation; or in the words of the text, "a man" (that is, any man, every man, though perhaps the emphasis is on the great men) "shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

¶ The nation was anxious about its own security. The permanence of the national life seemed to be imperilled; there was a feeling of interest in all questions which affected the defences of the nation. How can we maintain our national strength? That was the great question that was stirring the souls of the prophet's countrymen, and the question was being answered as thousands of people are answering it in our own England to-day. Look to your bulwarks, increase the strength of your fortifications, multiply your military forces, enter into alliance with the most powerful among the nations, and put your confidence in the strength of your arms and your armour. That was the predominant counsel

of the day, and it all amounted to this—that the strength and permanence of national life can be built upon a basis of material force. That was the popular conception as to what were the foundations of national stability, and so their policy was shaped in accordance with their views. Thus they strengthened their fortifications, they multiplied and consolidated their forces, and they entered into alliance first with one nation and then with another, and on this they built their fullest confidence and hope. Those were the conditions amid which the prophet worked and with which he had to deal. Against this conception of national security he lifted up his voice like the sound of a trumpet. Oh! Israel, thy strength, thy stability, thy permanence lie not in things like these. Thy feverish efforts are misdirected, thou art building upon shifting sand, and thy national life will collapse. The armour will rust and the arm of flesh will fail; the alliance with material forces is a covenant with death. Not in physical prowess, not in diplomatic shrewdness lies the strength of a nation. It rests in the character of its people. The most dangerous foes of a nation are not outside but within its borders. The foes of a nation which are most to be feared are of its own household. There lies your weakness, says the brave old prophet, and there will lie the secret of your strength. Riches and national permanence are embodied in the national life. Change the emphasis of your policy. You have been busy making alliances; now make a man.[1]

The subject is a simile. The life of man is likened to a wilderness journey, with its distresses and its alleviations. The title might be—"Relief from the Distresses of the Desert Journey."

I.

The Desert.

The Nearer East is dominated by the desert, just as Britain is by the sea. Behind all the thoughts of the Eastern there hovers some desert image or idea, and his characteristic moods of thought and feeling perplex the Western with the suggestion of a stony and artificial kind of desert beauty. If, as Robertson Smith has shown, Palestine appealed to its inhabitants always in unconscious contrast with the desert, then it was indeed a veritable Garden of the Lord, a land flowing with milk and

[1] J. H. Jowett, in *Christian World Pulpit*, lv. p. 84.

honey, a place of sacred trees and water springs which the Lord had blessed.[1]

There are countless men and women, says Jowett, to whom the pilgrimage through life is a pilgrimage over burning sands. There are some people—I have found them in my own congregation—who do not like me to announce that hymn which says, "Earth is a desert drear." Aye, but it is to a countless host! They have gone on like pilgrims, trudging along the desert sands, and they have been lured by mirage after mirage, which have only planted them into fresh deep abandonment and disappointment.

Notwithstanding all that we may say concerning the beauty and the blessedness scattered broadcast round about us; notwithstanding that we believe, and hold as for our lives, the "happy faith that all which we behold is full of blessing," it needs but a very short experience of this life and but a superficial examination of our own histories and our own hearts in order to come to the conclusion that the world is full of strange and terrible sadness, that every life has dark tracts and long stretches of sombre tint, and that no representation is true to fact which dips its pencil only in light and flings no shadows on the canvas. There is no depth in a Chinese picture, because there is no shade. It is the wrinkles and marks of tear and wear that make the expression in a *man's* portrait. "Life's sternest painter is the best."

Our life, says Spurgeon, is liable to many storms. (1) *Mental storms.* A rushing mighty wind of doubt comes sweeping down from the mountains of speculation, driving everything before it. (2) *Outward trial and trouble.* Doubtless, he says, there is a skeleton in every house. God will not let His song-birds build their nests here. (3) *Spiritual distress on account of discovered sin.* "I can truly say that I know of no pain that can be felt by the body that is comparable to the terrible pangs of conscience when the searching breath of the eternal spirit goes through the soul."

The distresses of the desert are divided by the prophet into four classes.

[1] J. Kelman, *From Damascus to Palmyra*, p. 176.

1. *Stormy winds*—"a hiding place from the wind."

1. A most troublesome invasion is that of the desert wind, laden with blinding clouds of dust, that gather the foul debris of the villages, and become as disgusting as they are distressing to throat and eyes. These winds rise suddenly, as if upon a signal, and then as suddenly die away, leaving the village in a kind of surprise, as if awakened from a nightmare, and still confused.

¶ The wind rises almost always at nightfall, and in its moaning the dullest soul must hear mysterious voices. Sometimes, as on the sea, it rises to a tempest; the sand moves in whirling and bending pillars that gleam light yellow against the indigo of thunder-clouds beyond. Nothing in Nature, perhaps, has a more ominous and menacing aspect than those tremendous shadows with the dance of the sand-devils before them like the Bacchanalian heralds of approaching destruction. In some of his finest lines Robert Browning has expressed the doom of Judgment Day by aid of the metaphor of a desert sand-storm—

> Oh, brother, 'mid far sands
> The palm-tree-cinctured city stands,
> Bright-white beneath, as heaven, bright-blue,
> Leans o'er it, while the years pursue
> Their course, unable to abate
> Its paradisal laugh at fate!
> One morn,—the Arab staggers blind
> O'er a new tract of death, calcined
> To ashes, silence, nothingness,—
> And strives, with dizzy wits, to guess
> Whence fell the blow. What if, 'twixt skies
> And prostrate earth, he should surprise
> The imaged vapour, head to foot,
> Surveying, motionless and mute,
> Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt,
> It vanish up again?[1]

¶ On March 21st we went over the flat desert to Wady Werdán. In the afternoon a violent storm of wind came up; the sand drifted so that it was almost impossible to open our eyes, and we could hardly make way against the gale. How the top-heavy camels kept on was a puzzle, for with so wide a hold on the wind they seemed as if they must go over. We struggled up to the shelter of some sand-hills, in the lee of which there was less wind but more sand. To pitch tents was a hard matter; the pegs

[1] *Easter Day*, xix.

dragged out at once, and I had to dig holes and bury them a foot under the sand-heaps. By sunset the gale went down, and we had a peaceful evening.[1]

¶ A tourist was being conducted through the railway tunnel under the Severn. A bell tinkled—that was a train from the Welsh side. Another bell rang out—that was a train from the English side. The tourist was anxious about his safety. "Come this way," said his guide. A few steps took them to a cleft in the rock, where they found shelter till the trains dashed by.[2]

2. A true man is one who defends and shelters the storm-tossed from the exposed places on the plains of human life. There are fierce and frivolous winds sweeping across many and many a life, often to the upturning of its roots, and overthrowing of its moral foundations. There are thousands of our brethren who are swept by the cruel winds, and the true man is one who, when he finds such, goes and stands between his brother and the wind, taking the windy side of the road, defending his brother, and affording him a cover to the winds.

¶ A Sunday-school teacher once went to pay a visit of condolence to the mother of one of her scholars, who had lost her husband. The man had been a cripple, unable to do much work, and unwilling to do the little work he was fit for. But the widow missed him, and in response to words of sympathy said, "Yes, ma'am, it's a poor door that does not keep off some of the wind."

2. *Tempests of rain*—"a covert from the tempest."

This is the meaning of the word "tempest" here—a sudden flood of rain. It is the "showers of the mountains" which Job speaks of (xxiv. 8). It is the "flood" with which God carries men away (Ps. xc. 5). It is the "tempest of waters" which "passed by" when the Lord appeared in His majesty (Hab. iii. 10).

¶ As we neared Bethany a new experience overtook us. It became bitterly cold, and presently down came a sudden rain, straight, violent, and icy. It was something of a surprise, for I had never associated that kind of rain with Bible countries. The abundant tropical rain one had of course heard of, but I had always imagined it warm and fruitful; here, however, was a cruel downpour, as spiteful as any experience in our northern climate. And yet it ought not to have been surprising at an elevation of something like 2500 feet above the sea. Moreover, out of some seventy or eighty Bible references to the rain, although the great majority

[1] W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Researches in Sinai*, p. 29.
[2] A. Aitken, in *The Churchman's Pulpit*, pt. 77, p. 32.

speak of the rain as an unmitigated blessing, we have the other side too: in the Book of Ezra, "the people sat trembling for the great rain," and in Ezekiel the Lord threatens to rain in the land of Israel with "an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone."[1]

¶ A wild storm was raging round a prairie home one night. The windows were blown in, and no lights could be kept burning. It was only with difficulty that the doors could be braced against the blast. The father was away from home, and the mother, grandmother, and three children sat in the darkness in a room on the sheltered side of the house, fearing that at any moment it might be swept from its foundations by the force of the wind. Suddenly, eleven-year-old Walter was missed. He had been holding a whispered conversation with his grandmother only a few moments before. Frantic with fear, the mother called him at the top of her voice, and receiving no reply, started to grope her way through the darkness of the house. She found the missing boy in bed, fast asleep. And when she asked him how he could go to sleep when they were all in danger of death, he sleepily replied, "Why, grandmother told me God would take care of us, so I thought I might as well go to bed again."

3. *Drought.* Every one has heard of the tragedies of thirst in desert places, but the significance of water needs to be seen and felt before it can be realised. When the way is long between the wells, the horses, when the halting-place comes at last in sight, press forward with pricked-up ears, and, forgetting their weariness, are with difficulty kept from a gallop. Camels go waterless for days, and it is strange to see them contentedly move out to graze when relieved of the tins of water they have carried, for which all the other beasts are crying out. The mules suffer most, and on one occasion we lost one after two days upon short allowance. The poor beast had shown no sign of flagging, and indeed had carried his burden friskily, but when his day's work was over and he had reached the camp, he lay down immediately on his back and died. Every one in the camp felt a kind of awe, beyond the keen sense of pity for the faithful brute. The significance of water in the desert is so immediate and so fateful, and the difference between a mouthful and the want of it is the difference between life and death. But the tragedy is far more appalling when the sufferer is a fellow-man.

[1] H. Rix, *Tent and Testament*, p. 184.

An unnoticed crack in a waterskin, or the jar spilt by a stumbling beast, is all that is needed to bring some poor mortal to his end. We passed one band of pilgrims returning, many of them on foot, from Mecca, and one of them, an old man, reached the Well of Ain el Beda with his tongue hanging from his mouth, cracked and bleeding. While we were resting by another well, a man staggered in from the plain, hardly able to walk, crying, "Water, water; I am dead!" When, on the return journey, we again visited Ain el Beda, a crowd of the Mecca pilgrims had camped beside the well in a confusion of tents new and old, among which camels knelt in supercilious nonchalance. But at the well-mouth tied skins were lying, filled to their utmost capacity with the precious thing, and tangled skeins of rope were everywhere about, while a dense crowd of swarthy men cursed and fought like wild beasts for the next skinful, though by that time they were drawing little else than liquid mud. It would be difficult to find in any one sentence so terrible a combination of tragedy and pathos as in the words we have all heard so often without a thought, "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none."[1]

There are dry, hard places in human life. A dry heart is perhaps the saddest and the most appalling thing in human life, and it is more common than many suppose; but wherever it is found, the true man will be to that dry heart like a river of plenteous water. How do hearts become hard? How do they become dry? Sorrow can do it, bereavement can do it, loneliness can do it, pain can do it. Have you not known a man go into a great sorrow and come out with a hard heart? Have you not known men go into sorrow fairly compassionate, with flowing sympathy, fertile as the plains, and interested in others, but they have emerged into active life again with the moisture of their compassion all dried up? Their friends have spoken of them in this wise: "He takes no interest in anything now." Compassion has shrunk like the ebbing tide. I think we must all know such, and that is what the prophet refers to when he speaks about "dry places."

4. *Heat.* We had spent the day in the glare of a Syrian sun, by the salt mountain of Usdum, in the hot blast of the sirocco, and were now bivouacked under the calcined cliffs of

[1] J. Kelman, *From Damascus to Palmyra*, p. 193.

Moab. When the water was exhausted, all too weary to go for more, even if there were no danger of a surprise, we threw ourselves upon the ground—eyes smarting, skin burning, lips, and tongue, and throat parched and dry; and wrapped the first garment we could find around our heads to keep off the stifling blast; and, in our brief and broken slumbers, drank from ideal fountains.[1]

O! the weariness felt by us all, of plod, plod, plodding across the sand! That fatal monotony into which every man's life stiffens, as far as outward circumstances, outward joys and pleasures go! the depressing influence of custom which takes the edge off all gladness and adds a burden to every duty! the weariness of all that tugging up the hill, of all that collar-work which we have to do! Who is there that has not his moods—and that by no means the least worthy and man-like of his moods—wherein he feels—not, perhaps, all is vanity, but "how infinitely weary it all is."

¶ I was reading, a day or two ago, one of our last books of travels in the wilderness of the Exodus, in which the writer told how, after toiling for hours under a scorching sun, over the hot white marly flat, seeing nothing but a beetle or two on the way, and finding no shelter anywhere from the pitiless beating of the sunshine, the three travellers came at last to a little Retem bush only a few feet high, and flung themselves down and tried to hide, at least their heads, from those "sunbeams like swords," even beneath its ragged shade. And my text tells of a great rock, with blue dimness in its shadow, with haply a fern or two in the moist places of its crevices, where there is rest and a man can lie down and be cool, while all outside is burning sun, and burning sand, and dancing mirage.[2]

¶ Along the roadsides in India the traveller finds at intervals great slabs of stone resting on two broad pillars. The native name for these erections is "Madam." They are used in this way. Travellers roll their burdens on the top of the slab, and rest themselves under it from the heat of the sun. A poor Hindu woman was asked what Christ was to her. "He is my Madam," she replied.[3]

¶ In the East the following phenomenon is often observed:—Where the desert touches a river-valley, or oasis, the sand is in a con-

[1] W. F. Lynch, *Expedition to the Dead Sea and the Jordan*, p. 315.
[2] A. Maclaren, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, iii. p. 141.
[3] A. Aitken, in *The Churchman's Pulpit*, pt. 77 p. 32.

tinual state of drift from the wind, and it is this drift which is the real cause of the barrenness of such portions of the desert at least as abut upon the fertile land. For under the rain, or by infiltration of the river, plants often spring up through the sand, and there is sometimes promise of considerable fertility. It never lasts. Down comes the periodic drift, and life is stunted or choked out. But set down a rock on the sand, and see the difference its presence makes. After a few showers, to the leeward side of this some blades will spring up; if you have patience you will see in time a garden. How has the boulder produced this? Simply by arresting the drift. Now that is exactly how great men benefit human life. A great man serves his generation, serves the whole race, by arresting the drift.[1]

II.

The Relief that a Man can bring.

When Isaiah says with such simplicity *a* man, he means any man, he means the ideal for every man. Having in ver. 1 laid down the foundation for social life, he tells us in ver. 2 what the shelter and fountain force of society are to be; not science or material wealth, but personal influence; the strength and freshness of the human personality.

If there is one feature more conspicuous than another in the prophecies of Isaiah it is the prominence given to the thought of a Deliverer who should be raised up for the nation. The promises of God to His repentant people are rich in assurance of peace and abundance, of returning prosperity to Judah and a new glory to Zion; but they are all to be fulfilled by the advent of One to whom should be the gathering of the people. Not by some great popular revolution, the establishment of some new law, but by the coming of a man who should be for an ensign of the people, was the purpose of the Divine mercy to be worked out. Such was the hope which had dwelt for centuries in the heart of the nation, and which each new teacher, from Moses downwards, had helped to foster, and which every priest who from the days of Aaron had ministered at the altar kept alive. To Isaiah it presented itself with special vividness. Of all the inspired company who have testified of Messiah and sung of His

[1] George Adam Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, i. 252,

glory, there is not one whose notes are clearer, and deeper, and purer, or who has contributed more of pathos and yet of rapture to this burst of celestial minstrelsy.

i. *The Strength of a Nation.*

This is a great statesman's conception of the character that makes a nation strong. The men who contribute to the national strength are—

(1) Men who think of and provide for the storm-tossed. Many fierce winds sweep across the plains of human life, winds of temptation, of trial, of toils that are oppressive. There are men who put themselves between these fierce winds and the people who are driven and beaten by them, and so become hiding-places behind which the storm-tossed find peace and rest. It may be by some invention that lightens the work of the toiler, by some provision that shortens the hours of toil, by some protection that shields from destroying temptation, by some advocacy or achievement that makes life's burdens easier.

(2) Men in whom others find defence; coverts from the tempest. I see John Brown and William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips going out when the tempest is raging to resist the storm, and in their splendid manhood becoming coverts for the oppressed and the defenceless. A covert from the tempest —the men who stand out in the exposed places to defend or to plead for those who are being beaten and buffeted and bruised; the Garrisons and the Lincolns, the men who hate wrong and who love the wronged—these are the men who made America.[1]

(3) Men out from whose lives there go holy streams of influence and inspiration, rivers of waters in a dry place. It is a vivid picture that this phrase paints. Yonder is a bit of barren land, hard and dry; there is no verdure, no flowers are there to regale the vision and no fruits to satisfy the hunger—a desolation. Rivers of water are turned into it, and "the thirsty land becomes springs of water, dormant seeds awake, drooping growths revive, the wilderness becomes a garden." A man shall be like rivers of water in a dry place. Human life has many dry places, each life has its own. The men of Isaiah's

[1] J. F. Carson, in *The Treasury*, June 1903, p. 128.

pattern enter into fellowship with these lives, awaken the old interest and quicken the dormant sympathies and compassions that had shrunk like the ebbing tide.

(4) Men whose personal faith and hope inspire others—the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Amid Western conditions it is hard to appreciate the force of the Oriental figure. It brings to our thought a band of pilgrims wearily wending their way over the hot sands of the desert, under the burning sun, exhausted in body and faint in heart, coming to a great rock in whose shadow they find rest. The men of Isaiah's type come to these people as the shadow of a great rock, protecting them against their disappointment and despair by leading them into the power of their own buoyant faith and within the scope of their own inspiring hope.

¶ It is easy to treat lightly the power of individual influence, but even in the affairs of the world the interest of history centres chiefly in individuals. A philosophic historian would probably tell us that this element has been allowed too much prominence, and that instead of interesting ourselves so deeply in the characteristics of individuals, we should take more note of peoples, and that the chief subject of interest is their progress. There is truth in the view; but to how large an extent are peoples affected by their great men and leaders, so that it is impossible to understand the development of the mass without a previous acquaintance with the spirit and teaching of those to whom they have looked up as leaders and guides. The multitude moves under the inspiration, in response to the call, of its great men. A sullen discontent may fill a nation's heart, but it remains inoperative until there arises one who shall give it voice, and not only voice, but power to make its protest effective. This is the lesson wrought out in the striking stories contained in the Book of Judges. Who are these men whose names are blazoned on the rolls of Isaiah's chivalry—Gideon, Jephthah, Samson—who are they but illustration of that striking saying of the prophet, "A man shall be as an hiding place"?

Is it not true, as Tennyson says, that—

"The individual withers and the world is more and more"?

Do we not expect to reform society by external or mechanical changes rather than by personal leadership? Do not people say to us, "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land is to be found behind our platform, or party, or creed"? Was not Matthew Arnold right when he said that the Americans had but one sacred

book, the Book of Numbers? On the contrary, the history of a democracy, as of all other forms of social organisation, is fundamentally a history of great men. Behind the power of numbers lies the power of personality. Our national progress is summed up in a few great names: Washington and Lincoln, Hamilton and Jefferson, Emerson and Lowell.[1]

ii. *The Strong in Israel.*

It is a call to every one, to every one who has received the gift of power and recognises it. And the call is to use the power so as to become a shelter, so as to become the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Let us take examples. It would be best if we could take ordinary instances, the men and women of like passions, and of like circumstances, such as we are. For the power is given to every one to become the shadow of a great rock. The recognition of the gift may be wanting as well as the use of it. But whoever will may have it and use it. There is no doubt that it would be best if we could take ordinary instances, but it is not possible. Ordinary men and women are not sufficiently well known. There is not enough known about them. We must take outstanding examples.

1. Let us take *Samson* first. It is not easy to make use of the career of Samson for edification. But we know that he received power. It is distinctly stated that the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him. And he used it. He used it according to his understanding and according to his circumstances. His power was in his own right arm. Single-handed he sought to stem the tide of Philistine encroachment. The effort was inadequate, but it was not so utterly inadequate as it seems to us. For it was made in the youth of the nations, and nations, like men, make more of physical strength in their youth than afterwards. According to the gift that was given him, and in spite of certain disabilities, Samson did become to his own time and people the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

The land was very weary These uncircumcised Philistines were a sore trial. Immigrants into the land of Palestine, which is now called after their name, they had come from afar—some say the island of Crete—and they had seized or built certain

[1] F. G. Peabody, *Mornings in the College Chapel*, 2nd Ser., p. 114.

strong cities by the seacoast. They were able and ambitious. They desired to possess the whole land. They were not careful to use legitimate means of accomplishing it. Already it had begun to be a life-and-death struggle between Israel and the Philistines.

And what if the Philistines should win? Is there a promise that through *them* all the nations of the earth shall be blessed? Will Isaiah come from Ashdod? Will the Messiah be born in Askelon? There Samson stood, the shadow of a great rock in that weary, weary land, using the power that had been given him, and in the way he understood it had been given him to use.

2. Take *Samuel* next. Samson was an athlete: Samuel was a statesman. Samson used the hand: Samuel used the head. The war is still with the Philistines. But it has now become manifest that no single hand, however strong, can bring relief. Samuel's task is to gather the tribes of Israel together and make a nation of them.

It may be that when the tribes of Israel feel the throb of nationality they will demand a king. Will Samuel refuse to give them a king? Will he plead that they have no king but Jehovah? He may have to give them a king. For God's ways are not as our ways. Through the gift of a king, a King may come.

Moreover, the war is still with the Philistines. And the Philistines are now more formidable than they were in the days of Samson. It may be, not only that the tribes of Israel must be gathered into a nation, but also that the nation requires a leader. And when Saul presented himself—look at him, head and shoulders taller, and a king every inch of him, for it is still the world's youth and the physical has more than its value—when Saul appeared, Samuel anointed him king. Samuel doubted the wisdom of it. But we see now that in that self-effacing act Samuel had become to his people as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

3. Let *Isaiah* come third. If Samson used his power with the hand, and Samuel with the head, Isaiah reached the heart. But first his own heart must be reached. He must himself come into right relation with God before he can begin to do the work which God has given him to do. Is this a new departure in God's leading? It is most momentous.

Samson had a personal feud with the Philistines, and that personal feud was the occasion (shall we say the opportunity?) for the exercise of the gift which God had given him, that the Philistines might be kept in check. Samuel was a patriot. The personal feud was swallowed up in the national quarrel. Now, the first duty of the patriot is obedience. But obedience to whom? Obedience to the superior. One man has soldiers under him, and he says to this one Go, and he goeth, and to another Come, and he cometh. But he himself is also set under authority. And when it comes to the king at last, even he has his superior in Jehovah. Samuel had to teach Saul that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

And it sometimes happens that stern things have to be done by the patriot in the name of obedience. "Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag, the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal."

But there is a greater sphere than the patriot's. It is the sphere of the prophet. And there is a greater virtue than obedience. It is reverence. Isaiah learns first of all that the God of Israel is a holy God; and then he learns that the God of Israel is the God not of Israel only, but of the whole earth.

He learns that the God of Israel is a holy God. Samson was not concerned with holiness in God, or with its immediate consequence, righteousness in man. A rude sense of justice he had, but little sense of obligation to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before his God. Even Samuel was more concerned with the welfare of the nation than with his own moral approach to God. Isaiah can do nothing until his lips have been touched with the live coal from off the altar. It is most momentous.

And as soon as he learns that God is a God of holiness, Isaiah learns also that He is the God of the whole earth. The same God who reaches to the heart stands in the centre of the Universe. And ludicrous as it will appear in moments of unbelief, he sees that his message is to the inhabitants of Sidon

and to the men of Babylon, and he answers at once, "Here am I, send me.'

4. The last is *Paul.* The athlete, the statesman the prophet —beyond these there is a higher, the Christian. John the Baptist was a prophet—there hath not arisen a greater prophet than John the Baptist. Nevertheless he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.

What is the Christian's secret? It is love. Samson did not understand it. He considered neither the Philistines nor the foxes when he sent the burning brands through the corn. Samuel did not understand it. "I remember what Amalek did to Israel"—and Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord. Isaiah did not understand it. But stay—Isaiah had at least a glimpse of it. Or if not Isaiah, then that other who said, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

For if love is the secret of the Christian, the secret of love is self-sacrifice. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels (and of prophets), and have not love, I am nothing. Love suffereth long and is kind."

The shadow of a great rock? Samson will do in the days of youth; Samuel in manhood, when patriotism is the divinity; Isaiah as the years pass, and the patriot finds that there is a God of the Gentile as well as of the Jew. But there is no refuge for a whole wide world of weariness except in the love of Him who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

iii. *The Strong in Modern History.*

Our own English history, and the history of Europe and America are full of the records of how destructive winds have swept across national life, and have left multitudes in bondage and ignorance. One of these awful winds — the wind of oppression swept across the Southern States of America, and held the poor negroes in the bondage of mental ignorance and physical servitude. It had been tearing its way over the wretched negro for many generations. But at last there came a man whose name will be held in eternal honour,

William Lloyd Garrison, who put himself between the negro and the wind, and other men, awakened by his example, went and stood by his side, notably that grand old Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier. These men breasted the wind, ever confronting the vicious greed of the wealthy slave-owner. They came over to our own country, they faced the hisses, the scorn, and contempt of the cotton merchants in Lancashire and Yorkshire—men whose profits would be diminished by the liberation of the slaves. They confronted, nay, they took their stand on, the great principle and eternal truth of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and the grand issue was the emancipation of the negro and the slave. They were hiding-places from the wind and coverts from the tempest.

1. The name of Alfred the Great will always shine brightly in our national history ; and, much later, there was " a man " who wore no regal crown, but who was the greatest and best of all the kings. Oliver Cromwell was a real hiding-place and covert to this land in the days when the crowned king was unworthy to rule. In him, God raised up " a man " who risked everything in the defence of the liberties which we still enjoy. What a hiding-place from the wind and what a covert from the tempest he was to the little company of persecuted saints in the valley of Piedmont ! The Duke of Savoy had determined to extirpate the Protestants ; but Cromwell heard of his cruelties, and resolved that he would do all that he could to rescue them from their persecutor's power. He sent for the French ambassador and told him to let his master know that he must have those persecutions stopped immediately. His Majesty replied that Savoy did not belong to him, and that he could not interfere with the Duke. " Nevertheless," replied Cromwell, " if you tell the Duke that you will go to war with him if he does not cease persecuting the Protestants, he will soon stop his butcheries. If you will not do that, I will go to war with you ; for, in the name of the Lord of hosts, I will defend His persecuted people."

2. Paul, Augustine, Wycliffe, Luther, Knox, Wesley, and Whitefield have exerted power which it is difficult to measure. We are interested in the men themselves. From some points in their teaching we may possibly dissent ; of some features in their character we may disapprove ; but candour compels us to recognise

the impression they made on their own times, and on those which have followed after.

3. When keen and blighting winds sweep over human life—winds of evil influence and foolish doctrine, laden with poisonous germs that pollute the moral atmosphere, and spread around a ruinous infection; when fierce tempests rage, in which wild passions are let loose, threatening to carry men away as with a flood from noble enterprise and lofty principle and patient service—these men of noble character have been as a hiding-place and covert to which distressed souls have fled for refuge, and in whom they have found the refuge that they sought. The very knowledge that they were there, unmoved in their holy purpose and their glorious faith, has been itself a strength to many a soul. And they have brought refreshment and encouragement to many a fainting heart, have revived the drooping energies of many a life, have kept alive a faith in goodness and a longing to be good, have been indeed a constant source of highest inspiration, doing for multitudes of their fellows what the copious and fertilising rivers do for the parched and barren land.

¶ I remember when I was in Italy a sight that moved my English sympathies very much. It was during the visit of President Loubet to Rome. In the procession, a military procession, with dazzling uniforms and military gewgaws, I saw one carriage containing a group of grizzled veterans wearing red shirts. It flashed upon me at once that these old fellows must have been the followers of Garibaldi, so with English audacity I went up and stopped the carriage and asked them whether it were so. The old men were pleased. They asked me what countryman I was, which was not just obvious at the moment, and I told them. "Ah," said one of them, "in that trying hour England was the friend of Garibaldi." England was. Why? Because he was a man. Victor Emmanuel was seated upon the throne of a united Italy almost against his will by a man who knew how to do and dare. While politicians were scheming and plotting and hesitating, Garibaldi landed and trusted the patriotism of his countrymen. These old men told me they had followed him in all his campaigns, had marched with him to victory, had seen Emmanuel crowned first king of modern Italy. He was only king; their hero, almost their god, was Garibaldi. The utterance of his name, the wearing of his uniform, was to them an incentive to higher manhood, and they looked indeed men.[1]

[1] R. J. Campbell, *Sermons to Young Men*, p. 200.

¶ Of William, Prince of Orange, Motley says, as he closes his history of the *Rise of the Dutch Republic*: 'He went through life bearing the load of a people's sorrows upon his shoulders with a smiling face. Their name was the last word upon his lips, save the simple affirmative, with which the soldier who had been battling for the right all his lifetime, commended his soul in dying to 'his great captain, Christ.' The people were grateful and affectionate, for they trusted the character of their 'Father William,' and not all the clouds which calumny could collect ever dimmed to their eyes the radiance of that lofty mind to which they were accustomed, in their darkest calamities, to look for light. As long as he lived, he was the guiding-star of a brave nation, and when he died the little children cried in the streets."[1]

III.

The Relief that Comes from Christ.

Isaiah's words are not only man's ideal: they are God's promise, and that promise has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the most conspicuous example—none others are near Him—of this personal influence in which Isaiah places all the shelter and revival of society. God has set His seal to the truth, that the greatest power in shaping human destiny is man himself, by becoming one with man, by using a human soul to be the Saviour of the race.

A *man* shall be a refuge, rivers of water, the shadow of a great rock. Such an expectation seems to be right in the teeth of all experience, and far too high-pitched ever to be fulfilled. It appears to demand in him who should bring it to pass powers which are more than human, and which must in some inexplicable way be wide as the range of humanity and enduring as the succession of the ages. It is worth while to realise to ourselves these two points which seem to make such words as those of our text a blank impossibility. Experience contradicts them, and common sense demands for their fulfilment an apparently impossible human character.

What do we find in Christ that makes Him a refuge and a rock?

[1] J. L. Motley, *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, iii. p. 480.

1. He is a man. Oh how often, in the thought of Christ's real humanity, has my soul found a hiding-place from all manner of storms! God!—the word is great. God!—the idea is sublime. The great Eternal Jehovah, who made the heavens and the earth, and who bears them up by His unaided power, who rides upon the stormy sky, and puts a bit into the mouth of the raging tempest—how shall I, a poor worm of the dust, draw nigh to such a God as this? The answer quickly comes, "He has been pleased to reveal Himself in the Man Christ Jesus."

Do not talk any more about the point where humanity leaves off and divinity begins, or divinity leaves off and humanity beings. Christ is all human, human all the time, Divine all the time. He is your brother, He is also more than that. He is your God. There is nothing in Christ that is foreign to what you and I aspire to know in our God. And yet Christ is as completely human as you. Pardon me, I have even understated my case. He is more human than you are. The only Man whom the world has ever seen is your Christ and mine, as human as you. Your humanity will come to its own only when it aspires to His and is represented in it. Remember, there is no dividing line between the Deity and the Humanity of our blessed Lord. He is both, and both are one. The Christ of the Gospel is just your Christ, the Christ you are seeking, the Christ you need. "A *man* shall be as an hiding place from the wind, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."[1]

¶ Humanity is longing, sighing, praying. Men are calling for a higher manhood. The manhood of Jesus, oh, show it to them, I beseech you.

'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever! A Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand.

2. He is a Saviour. This figure of a rock, resisting drift, gives us some idea, not only of the commanding influence of

[1] R. J. Campbell.

Christ's person, but of that special office from which all the glory of His person and of His name arises: that *He saves His people from their sins.* For what is sin? Sin is simply the longest, heaviest drift in human history. It arose in the beginning, and has carried everything before it since. "The oldest custom of the race," it is the most powerful habit of the individual. Men have reared against it government, education, philosophy, system after system of religion. But sin overwhelmed them all. Only Christ resisted, and His resistance saves the world.

3. He is ever living and interceding. Our earthly friends may die, but we shall never lose our best Friend. All merely human comforters will fail us sooner or later, but He will ever abide true and steadfast to all who rely upon Him.

He lives, the great Redeemer lives,—

so His cause is always safe, and our safety is always secured in Him. Hide thyself, therefore, in the ever-living Man; for, there, thou needst not fear any change that the rolling ages may bring.

Blessed be the name of Jesus, He is also *the interceding Man*; for, at this very moment, He is pleading for His people before His Father's throne. We cannot see Him; yet, sometimes, when our faith is in lively exercise, we can almost behold Him, and can all but hear Him presenting His almighty pleas on behalf of all those who have entrusted their case into His hands.

In every dark distressful hour,
When sin and Satan join their power,
Let this dear hope repel the dart,
That Jesus bears us on His heart.

The King and the Country.

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The King and the Country.

Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold a far stretching land [R.V.*m.* a land of far distances].—xxxiii. 17.

The circumstances that gave rise to this saying were those connected with the memorable siege of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. The tents of the Assyrians were blackening all the heights round the sacred city, and the inhabitants were reduced to the greatest straits. Hezekiah during this siege covered himself with sackcloth and ashes, and humbled himself before God. He was also disfigured with the boils of a severe and dangerous illness, and prayed earnestly for relief. In these trying circumstances, a cheering promise of deliverance came by the mouth of the prophet, conveyed in imagery derived from the circumstances of the siege. The fierce invader, Sennacherib, would be routed, the besieging troops would be withdrawn, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem would see the king in his beauty—restored to health, and clothed again with the gorgeous robes of state which he had laid aside during the period of his humiliation. They would also behold the land of farnesses. Hitherto, for a long period, they had been shut up in the besieged city; they were confined within the walls and closed gates of Jerusalem; their horizon was bounded by the narrow streets and houses around them; they could see nothing beyond—no green tree, or field, or garden. But when the siege would be ended, they would be able to go out at will into the country, and feast their eyes upon its fair landscapes and far-extending prospects. They would be brought out into a free and large place, and their horizon would stretch into illimitable distances.

This, then, is the first application of the text; and so interpreted, what a beautiful image it is. But it has a further application than this. The text is undoubtedly Messianic,

although, as Dr. Skinner says, some commentators have been unaccountably slow in perceiving this. And when we have reached the Messianic sphere, it is legitimate, even although it may be no part of the original prophecy, to pass yet further and use the text to introduce us to the beauty of the ascended Lord, and to the limitless stretches of that heaven where the redeemed dwell whom no man can number. Thus there will be three stages of exposition—(1) the ideal kingly beauty of the commonplace and the enlargement of the narrow and the near; (2) the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth and the far-stretching Kingdom of God; (3) the beauty of the King of Glory and the emancipation of Heaven.

I.

The Beauty of the Commonplace and the Enlargement of the Narrow.

How persons or things appear to us depends as much upon our own eyesight as upon the persons or things themselves. While the people saw Hezekiah humiliated and unlovely, Isaiah saw him a king in his beauty. For the soul of Isaiah was emancipated from the earthly. His eye had the spiritual insight. This lifted him up so that he saw the king from a heavenly height, transformed in the purpose of God to the beauty of true kingliness. And at the same time he saw the kingdom ever widening till it fulfilled the utmost reach of the promise—from sea to sea, and from the River unto the ends of the earth.

¶ The bold aeronaut who ascends through the invisible air not only looks up and beholds the ever-nearing blue heavens, but he also looks down, and lo! because of his ascent, all he is leaving below him changes and becomes transfigured. Not only has the horizon of his outlook vastly extended, but the inequalities of level and the natural boundaries and differences of earth that seemed so insuperable when he walked thereon have vanished away. Hill and dale have melted into one dead level. City and country, field and moor, land and sea fade into each other. The towering mountain shrinks into a veritable molehill, and the broad, deep-flowing river dwindles to a silver thread. Such, I think, is no unfaithful symbol and picture of the inevitable two-

fold effect on those happy souls who ascend in the atmosphere of the spiritual. Nay, may I not go further in this analogy and say that just as the aeronaut proves and measures his ascent towards the blue sky by the altering appearance of the earth he looks down upon—being so much nearer to the latter than he is to the former—so a man's upward approach to God is most surely measured by his altering view of humanity? We know that Isaiah had ascended into the heavenlies because he wrote this text.[1]

i. *The King in His Beauty.*

What is beauty? The best definition is an old one. "The essence of the beautiful consists in *amplitude* and *order*" (Arist. *Poet.* vii.). The *sublime* and the *pretty* are two opposite modifications. The *sublime* is the beautiful with its amplitude pushed into indefinite vastness and the tender smile, which is the inevitable tribute, exchanged for a certain awe. The *pretty* is at the opposite end of the measurement. It is beauty so reduced on the scale as to want the nobility of seriousness; so petty that our admiration is not without a certain intermixture of contempt. The beautiful, when it approaches the verge of terror at one extreme or of contempt at the other, when it begins to be feared or patronised, may soon have to be called by another name. The soul and the actions of man are properly, and not merely by analogy, termed beautiful. There are natures so large and so conformed to moral harmony that we instinctively term them beautiful. There are actions which show so much of the beauty of the soul from which they proceed that we call them also beautiful.

¶ To the carnal eye, John Bunyan dwelt within the narrow walls of Bedford jail, with only coarse and painful things to contemplate and suffer; but his spiritual imagination made him live in a country where it was summer the year round. He dwelt in the Palace Beautiful, climbed the Hill Beulah, heard golden trumpets, saw the city of gems and glass lighted with the glory of God.

1. We are so framed by God as to experience delight in the contemplation of objects which we term beautiful. Take, for instance, the beauties of nature, as they are called. With dimmed vision and burdened heart man can snatch from the faded loveli-

[1] C. E. P. Antram,

ness of a sin-stained earth moments of refreshment that make him purer and stronger for the task he has to perform here. Who does not feel this? Who does not take pleasure in form and colour? Who does not love to look at a green field or a garden of flowers; at a clump of trees, or a stream of water gliding and sparkling through the thickness of overhanging leaves? Which of us has not been sometimes drawn away from busy or anxious thoughts to look at an evening sky when the sun went down amidst piles of clouds that glowed and glittered as if they were mountains of jewels, or the far-off pinnacles of the golden city?

2. The beauty of humanity transcends all other beauty, and in the human countenance God has, as it were, sealed up the sum of its perfection. There is nothing in visible nature, in earth or sky, so beautiful to look upon as a beautiful face. The feeling is common to man everywhere, and at all time; and it is a holy feeling. The admiration inspired by earthly beauty has something very sacred and mysterious in it, as all our deeper emotions have; although for us, who know the truth of the Incarnation, the union of our nature with the Divine in the person of Christ, the mystery is cleared.

3. What, then, is that aspect or attribute of the human soul from which outward beauty springs? It is not life only, nor mind, nor intellectual power. What is it? To answer this question we have only to consider what is the characteristic attribute of the soul itself—that which is supreme over all others, which is inseparable from it, and belongs to its very essence. To us Christians, at any rate, the reply is at hand. That which distinguishes the soul, and makes it to be what it is, is its moral nature. Man was first created in the image of God, and when he lost it the Son of God became incarnate in order to restore it; and that image the Scripture describes as consisting in righteousness and true holiness. The central attribute of the soul, then, is its moral character, and in this at last we find the source of outward beauty. In a word, it is goodness, and goodness alone, that sheds over the countenance this Divine lustre which men call beauty.

4. Dare we advance higher? Nature is beautiful because it reveals thought; the human face is more beautiful because

it reveals that moral goodness of which thought is only a condition; the soul is more beautiful, for in it dwells the goodness that lights the countenance; but all these, and the highest of them all, are but dim and broken reflections of a beauty which is beyond and above all, as it is the source of all. "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty." To see the King in His beauty is to see the beauty of His glorified humanity taken for ever into the Godhead. It is to see that form which the Son of God took to Himself in the womb of the Virgin, bore while He dwelt on earth, raised from the grave, ascended with into heaven, and in which He now stands at the right hand of the Father. It is to see with the eyes the perfect manhood of God incarnate; it is to see the face of God; it is to see with the soul the beauty from which it derives any beauty—the beauty of holiness, of purity, of truth, of love, of mercy, of justice, of wisdom, of all perfection. It is to see this, not through cloud, or in vision, or broken by any medium, but as directly as it is possible for the creature to see the uncreated. It is for the soul to see by participation, to see the more the more it partakes; to bathe in the abysses of that glory, beholding and becoming itself beautiful in beholding, even as the light of the sun imparts its light to the object it falls upon, and glorifies that on which it shines.

¶ Shall we follow for a day one who has got the true perspective? Here is the outer side: a humble home, a narrow circle, measuring goods, chopping a typewriter, checking a ledger, feeding the swift machinery, tiresome examination papers; and all the rest of the endless, endless doing, day by day, of the commonplace treadmill things that must be done, that fill out the day of the great majority of human lives. This one whom we are following unseen is doing quietly, cheerily, his daily round, with a bit of sunshine in his face, a light in his eye, and lightness in his step. He is working for God. No, better, he is working with God. He has an unseen friend at his side. Now, hold your breath and look, for here is the inner side, where the larger work of life is being done. Here is the quiet bit of time alone with God. God Himself is here. The angels are here. This room opens out into, and is in direct touch with, a spirit space as wide as the earth. To-day a half-hour is spent in China, for its missionaries, its native Christians, its millions. And so this man pushes his spirit through Japan, India, Persia, the home-land, the city; in

and out; out and in. This is the true Christian life. The true follower of Jesus has as broad a horizon as his Master.[1]

Three worlds there are:—the first of Sense—
That sensuous earth which round us lies;
The next of Faith's Intelligence:
The third of Glory in the skies.

The first is palpable but base:
The second heavenly, but obscure;
The third is star-like in the face—
But ah! remote that world as pure!

Yet, glancing through our misty clime,
Some sparkles from that loftier sphere
Make way to earth; then most what time
The annual spring flowers appear.

Amid the coarser needs of earth
All shapes of brightness, what are they
But wanderers, exiled from their birth,
Or pledges of a happier day?

Yea, what is beauty, judged aright,
But some surpassing transient gleam;
Some smile from Heaven, in waves of light,
Rippling o'er life's distempered dream?

Or broken memories of that bliss
Which rushed through first-born Nature's blood
When He who ever was, and is,
Looked down and saw that all was good?[2]

ii. *The Land of Far Distances.*

The land of far distances was not for Isaiah in some foreign country, to which a long and toilsome pilgrimage had to be made. It was simply the region round Jerusalem, the fair open country, fading away in the far-off aerial perspective; the land of clear lights and distant views, as contrasted with the narrow streets and the strait boundaries of the besieged city. And all that was necessary to enable the inhabitants to see it was that the siege should be ended, and that they should be delivered and allowed to go out of the city to behold it. And

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer.* [2] Sir Aubrey de Vere.

so the spiritual land of far distances which it symbolises, is not a land removed from us into the remote depths of heaven, like a fixed star. It is round about us; our being is in it now; our souls are the inhabitants of it here. It is our Fatherland. This world itself is the land of far distances. Its things that are unseen and eternal are only eclipsed by the shadow of ourselves. All that is necessary is that our eyes should be opened, and that we should be delivered from the bondage of sin, and made heavenly-minded in order to see it.

¶ The land of far distances! The image could only have originated in an Eastern country, where the atmosphere is so crystal clear that the remotest distances are visible. Our cloudy northern skies limit the horizon and circumscribe the view, and bring the heavens like a roof close to the earth. But in Eastern lands the brilliant sunshine and the translucent air give the feeling of vast aerial space, and the heavens ascend to an infinite height. It is a large, open, radiant world, where, as in the old description of the Celtic heaven, "distance fades not on the sight, and nearness fatigues not the eye." Wandering recently over a moorland in Perthshire, on one of those perfect autumn days which are so rare in our climate, when earth seems a suburb of the celestial city, I saw, upwards of a hundred miles away, behind the blue hills that bounded the horizon, the summit of Ben Macdhui, which I had never seen before from this point, with the snow patches on it glancing white in the sun. That vision of the far-off mountain land glorified the whole landscape, introduced into it an element of grandeur and immensity before unknown. It reminded me irresistibly of the land of far distances of Isaiah, and gave a wonderful impressiveness to the beautiful image.[1]

1. We live for the most part in a land that is narrow and confined. The walls of life hem us in. The freedom which the most favourably situated of us imagine we enjoy is only the length of our chain. We are limited by our natures, by our faculties, by our weaknesses, by our circumstances. Human nature, made in the image of God, and destined for eternity, is in itself a large thing, and it needs a large world to live in. But we are each shut up in a small world; and, small as it is at the best, we make it still smaller by our sins and our follies. We enclose ourselves in straits, and confine ourselves in prisons of our own making. We dwarf our natures and belittle our

[1] Hugh Macmillan.

powers by the insect tasks to which we devote ourselves. We paralyse our faculty of enjoyment by undue indulgence. We lay waste our powers by over-exertion; we narrow our faculties by concentrating them upon the one aim and end of becoming successful in the world. We are short-sighted, looking only at the things that are seen and temporal.

¶ It is one of our everyday trials,—a trial that partly explains the modern passion for holidays—that life consists so largely of foreground. It is the bane of the great city that it smothers backgrounds out of view—the background of cloud and horizon, of large thought and quiet meditation, of great motives and high interests. We are imprisoned in the office, the alley, the day, the moment. So many people to see, so many things to be done, so many visits to pay, so many letters to be written, so many orders to be dispatched, so much domestic detail to be attended to,—such is the daily routine of the majority of mankind. The best that Mr. Dick Swiveller could boast of, when trying to let his room to the little old gentleman, was that it afforded "an uninterrupted view across the street."[1]

2. How are we to have our horizon enlarged? Satan comes and promises that our eyes shall behold the land of far distances if we will only obey him. He took up our Lord to the top of an exceeding high mountain, and showed to Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and promised that they should be His if He would fall down and worship him. He offered to transport our first parents beyond the limits of their narrow garden and give them a godlike freedom to enjoy, if they would eat of the forbidden fruit. And as he tempted the first and the second Adam, so he tempts every man. He knows that the eye of man was made for far distances—that the soul of man longs instinctively for wider and more varied experiences than can be found in the little round of daily life; and therefore he cunningly adapts his temptation to this godlike instinct. He offers a freer and a larger world. But the disenchantment soon comes. The eyes are opened, and they see that the promise of the vision is a mere mirage of the desert, which has changed for the moment the thirsty land and the arid air into the appearance of living waters and refreshing verdure. Instead of far distances and boundless prospects, the transgressor finds himself in straits which

[1] E. Griffith-Jones.

become narrower as he advances, until at last, like the prison-house of the mediæval story—constructed with fiendish ingenuity to contract its walls every day—they close in upon him and crush him, and his prison becomes his grave. Sin inevitably cripples the energy and restricts the freedom of the human powers. To that longing for freedom and enlargement which is the chief element of fascination in every sin, the tempter has nothing to give but the experience of a drearier imprisonment.

3. The true enlargement comes only when the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from the law of sin and death. Then are we brought out from the confining bars of the prison-house of the soul; then have we the vision and the faculty Divine, and become far-sighted indeed. We feel like one who has been transferred from the dark, dreary depths of a cavern to the summit of a lofty mountain, from which the eye takes in at a glance a boundless horizon. We have a sense of recovered freedom which quickens and enlarges the soul. Old familiar things acquire a new aspect and meaning. The vastness and glory of the universe fill us with joy, because it all belongs to our Father, and is ours by virtue of our Divine sonship. We behold the things that are unseen and eternal. Both worlds, the earthly and the heavenly, come within our horizon, and are visible in one view to the eye of faith. All things are ours—life and death, things present and things to come.

¶ We speak of a prisoner being "set at large"; but we little realise what the phrase means to him—the new and thrilling sense of largeness around him; air and space and light, and God's great world, with its lofty sky overhead; nothing confining his movements or intercepting his view but the horizon, which, in the far distance, comes down upon the earth with walls of blue air, opening up into farther distances as he moves on. His eye, hitherto accustomed to the semi-opaque gloom of the narrow prison-cell, beholds with rapture the wide, open country. In such new circumstances his soul expands within him, and he feels himself a part of the infinite light and liberty around.[1]

4. There is no promise more pronounced in the Scriptures than just this promise of the enlargement and intensification of the sight. We are to be delivered from petty outlooks, from narrow

[1] Hugh Macmillan.

and confined horizons, and we are to see things in large relationships, and to behold the far-off issues. It is the will of our God that we should be spiritually endowed with a sort of prairie sight, with eyes that can scan mighty areas and see things when they are far away. Long sight is what the majority of us lack, and it is what we all need. It is essential to the healthiness of our spirits that we should be able to see things before they are quite at our doors.

(1) I want to be able to see *temptation* when it is a long way off. I need to distinguish sin in its small and apparently innocent beginnings. I want the perception which can detect it when it is in the germ, when it is a mere infant, when it is a playful cub. Yes, I need to be able to read the fatality that dwells in the cub long before it becomes a full-grown and overpowering beast. I am so easily deceived, and I hear the world say to me, "There is no harm in it," and the specious utterance frequently leads to my undoing. I want long sight.

¶ Some of you know the old Greek story describing how Ulysses slew the monster Proteus. You know how he had been forewarned that it would be of no use to kill it only in its first form, because the monster would change itself from shape to shape, appearing now as a seal, now as a lion, now as a bear. Only by recognising it in its first form, and killing it in each different shape, could he hope to conquer it in the end. And you remember how, by following this advice, Ulysses was able to conquer, though only after a very long struggle.

It is only an old Greek legend, I know; but perhaps it will bring out more clearly what we mean by sins "in disguise." Sometimes a temptation to sin comes to you—so small that it seems hardly worth your while to fight against it. But if you do not recognise it as a sin in its first form, and try to overcome it at once, then it, too, will change from shape to shape, until at last it will become a giant sin, bearing, perhaps, no likeness at all to the first little sin which as boys you allowed to enter your mind, but a giant sin so huge that you cannot cast it out.[1]

¶ It was only the other day that we read in the papers of conceit leading a man on to commit a brutal murder. When the actor William Terriss was killed, we thought at first that there must have been some strong motive for the crime: some cruel injustice, some secret wrong, had been done to the man; it would all come out at the inquest. But no, at the inquest no particular reason

[1] F. de W. Lushington, *Sermons to the Young Boys*, p. 19.

could be assigned. It was only that the man, Prince, from his boyhood up had thought of himself too highly—always looking for admiration, and angry when he didn't get it; failing again and again, but always thinking his failure undeserved. At last this wrong idea of his power produced in him a distorted view of his abilities, a condition of mind which the doctors described as a form of madness, and led him to kill in cold blood a man who, he thought, had slighted him, but who had really done him no single wrong.[1]

(2) I would like the power to see *homesick prodigals* when they are still away in the far country. This was the characteristic sight of the Father: "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him!" It is the pathos and tragedy of the Church, and of so many of the Lord's disciples, that we see the prodigal only when he knocks at the door and when the long return is over. We know him when he kneels at the penitent bench, or expresses himself in some outward confession. We do not see him before confession springs to his lips, and while a sullen indifference appears still to sit upon his face. I would have the sight which can see the beginnings of the better life, while the outside still seems violently antagonistic.

(3) I would like to have the power of seeing the far-off significance of seemingly *insignificant events.* I covet the gift of a sanctified imagination, which can look down long highways into distant futurity. For instance, when an apostle like Paul walks into imperial Rome, utterly unheeded and ignored, I would like the power of being able to foresee some of the amazing possibilities of that lonely entrance. When a few women are met together for prayer by the riverside at Philippi, entirely unnoticed in the busy, hurrying life of the great city, I would have the power of tracing in sanctified imagination the far-reaching, healthy currents proceeding from that consecrated circle. When James Gilmour crosses the frontier into Mongolia, and sets his single plough to the upturning of the soil in that mighty land, I would have the eyes that can see coming harvests, vast reaches of waving corn, shining ripe before the face of my Lord. When the New Testament is translated into a new language I would have the power of seeing the tremendous influence of the modest book, the light

[1] F. de W. Lushington, *Sermons to the Young Boys*, p. 19.

it will bring, and the warmth, and the moving air, and the genial liberty.

(4) I would like to see the distant and glorious possibilities which are the purposed inheritance of my children. When I look at my boy I want the eyes which can see beyond what he is to what he can be, and I want to live in the inspiration of that splendid prospect. It is altogether needful that I should see my child other than he is if I am to lead him into something better. My imagination must rivet itself upon the contemplation of his splendid possibilities, and I must work upon the immediate while I gaze upon the distant. With the ideal in my eyes I must turn to present training, and the strength and glory of the possibility will get into my moulding fingers and determine the quality of my immediate work. The "far-away" shall lend its influence to the near, and something of the glory of the goal shall shine upon the very beginnings.[1]

II.

The text is now to be regarded in its application to the Messiah and the Messianic Kingdom.

i. *The Beauty of the Son of Man.*

Christian thinkers have expressed two different conceptions of the personal presence of Jesus. Some have inferred from such words as those in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. . . . Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," that the Messiah was weak and suffering, stricken with disease; nay, even, from the expression "smitten of God," that He was a leper. But others again, seeking what they have felt to be a natural association between physical and moral beauty in the Divine life on earth, have pictured Him as fairer than the children of men, full of grace and glory, yea, altogether lovely. Perhaps the two lines of prophetic utterance are not wholly irreconcilable. It is difficult to believe that beauty of

[1] J. H. Jowett.

soul such as was seen in Him alone should not have expressed itself in physical attractiveness. There is no mention of His suffering from disease. Yet who can think of Him—the Man of Sorrows—the Supreme Sufferer, except as showing in His physical aspect something of the burden of the world's sinfulness? But it seems, if the Gospels are justly interpreted, that the might—the majesty—of His Divine Nature flashed ever and again through the vesture of His human life. Let us recall only the passage where St. John relates how the soldiers who came to arrest Him in Gethsemane, at His words, "I am he," immediately "went backward and fell to the ground." The evangelist may well have been thinking of that incident or of others like it, of which he had been an eye-witness, when he wrote in the preface of his Gospel: "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

It is surely no light thing that the Christian world in its universal tradition of half a hundred generations, has piously and intimately believed that the second Adam, like the first, bore the outward signature of God's perfect hand. It is not without some deep reason, dwelling in universal belief among those countless things which, if written, should have filled the whole world with Scriptures; or in the intuitions of the Spirit, or in the instinct of love, or in the self-evident harmonies of God's works; it is not, I say, without some or all of these reasons, that the world has believed that prophets, psalmists, and seers knew what they spake, and spake what they beheld. It is a pardonable fault to take them in the letter of their words, and a harmless error to go astray with the belief of Christendom. We shall not be dangerously out of the way, if we lovingly and humbly believe that He who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person, did take unto Himself our manhood as His revealed presence for ever, in its most perfect image and likeness; that where two natures were united, as both were perfect, so both were beautiful. I know not what he may be to whom such a thought is not blessed.[1]

¶ Among all the artists who represented Christ's life, one stands alone for his unique, unconventional, and manifold treatment of it

[1] H. E. Manning, *Sermons*, iii. p. 439.

and its subject. Others have represented Him in the common humanities of life, but they have lacked the power to give with equal grandeur the awful moments in which His mission was concentrated. Others have represented Him ideally and with sublimity, but they have not been able to touch such subjects as the Supper at Cana without either making it too ideal or too vulgar. One man alone has mingled, without a trace of effort, and with a profound conception at the root of his work, the heavenly with the earthly, the Divine with the human, the common with the wonderful, the poetical with the prose of daily life, in his representation of the human existence of Christ. That man was Tintoret. In his "Last Supper," for example, it is a common room in which the Apostles and the Master meet. Servants hurry to and fro; the evening has fallen dark, and the lamps are lit; those who eat the meal are really fishermen and unlearned men; here and there, there are incidents which prove that the artist wished to make us feel that it was just such a meal as was eaten that night by every one else in Jerusalem. We are in the midst of common human life. But the upper air of the chamber is filled with a drift of cherubim, and the haze of the lamp light takes that azure tint with which the artist afterwards filled the recesses of the "Paradise," and the whole soft radiance of the lamp falls on and envelops the upright figure of Christ, worn and beautiful, and bending down to offer to one of His disciples the broken bread. It is common human life filled with the Divine. It is the conception of Christ's personality which modern theology ought to possess, because it ought to be the ideal of our own life.[1]

In his volume on *Christ in Modern Life* Stopford Brooke makes an effort to analyse the character of Jesus as a man. He finds that it contains these elements.

1. *Sensibility.*—Not sensitiveness, which is too passive. Sensibility is sensitiveness with the addition of activity of soul exercised upon the impressions received. Jesus manifested (1) sensibility to natural beauty. He had watched the tall "lilies" arrayed more gloriously than Solomon; He had marked the reed shaken in the wind, and the tender green of the first shoot of the fig tree. (2) Sensibility to human feeling. This is the highest touch of beauty in a character. He saw Nathanael under the fig tree and recognised the long effort of the man to

[1] Stopford A. Brooke.

be true. He met Peter in the morning light, and seeing through all the surface impetuosity of his character deep into the strength of his nature, called him Cephas the rock.

2. *Sympathy.*—When sensibility to human feeling is translated into action it becomes sympathy. The examples are innumerable. How discriminating was the sympathy which gave to Martha and to Mary their several meed of praise. With what forgetfulness of His own pain did He speak the distinctive word to mother and apostle: Behold thy son! Behold thy mother!

¶ But, as Dr. Guthrie says, there is no sight in the wide world like Jesus Christ, with forgiveness on His lips, and a crown in His blessed hand! This is worth labouring for; praying for; living for; suffering for; dying for. You remember how the prophet's servant climbed the steeps of Carmel. Three years, and never cloud had dappled the burning sky; three long years, and never a dewdrop had glistened on the grass, or wet the lips of a dying flower; but the cloud came at last. No bigger than a man's hand, it rose from the sea; it spread; and as he saw the first lightnings flash, and heard the first thunders roll, how did he forget all his toils! and would have climbed the hill, not seven but seventy times seven, to hail that welcome sight! It is so with sinners as soon as their eyes are gladdened with a believing sight of Christ; when they have got Christ; and with Him peace.

When the lights of life are gleaming,
  Where its blossoms bud and bloom;
When each brow is bound with roses,
  As we bask in their perfume:
Just beyond the smiles and sunshine,
  All unseen the Master stands,
Waiting ever, ever waiting,
  Holding out His pierced hands.

When the lights of life are darkened,
  As its flowers fall and fade,
And we watch our loved ones vanish
  Thro' the silence, and the shade;
Then the Master draweth nearer,
  Thro' the circling shadow lands;
Waiting ever, ever waiting,
  Holding out His pierced hands.

When the shades of night are falling,
Where each heart must stand alone,
And the world has left us nothing
We can call or claim our own:
Then we turn to meet the Master,
Where a halo lights the past,
Waiting ever, ever waiting,
Till we clasp His hands at last.

ii. *The Far-stretching Kingdom.*

The text is to be considered as the great prophet's vision of a Divine King who reigns over the earth from the heaven of heavens. It is the great foreshadowing of a universal empire, a kingdom bounded only to human view by the far-distant horizon of man's outlook. It foretells that blessed time yet to be when all the kingdoms of the world shall merge into that one abiding Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, by the extinction of all racial differences in the one spiritual and enduring nationality of a new life through a new birth. The text is indeed but a poetic anticipation of those plain words of the King of kings Himself which He addressed to the astonished Jews in Matt. viii. 11: "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

But the Kingdom of God is to be a kingdom of far distances, not only as it stretches geographically over the surface of the earth. More than that, there is to be an expansion of view and a deepening of experience on the part of every member of the kingdom.

1. *An expansion of knowledge.*—There are godly men and women who never get beyond the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. The cross and resurrection, the victories of the Holy Ghost, the richness of the Christian hope—these are continents that lie waiting for their exploration.

2. *The onward march of holiness.*—The character of the disciple of Christ is an unlimited and immeasurable Paradise. He never comes to its margin. However long he may have been crucifying the flesh and following hard after Jesus Christ, is there not still some lurking sin to be dragged out and slain?

is there not still some grace in the incomparable Law to be appropriated and wrought into the fibre of his being?

3. *The development of service.*—In teaching, in healing, in comforting, in seeking to make the rule of Christ a reality among those around us, in doing the will of the Father, what opportunities we have for ingenuity, for originality, for improving old enterprises, and for initiating plans untried before! Out of my love for Him, and my longing to win men to Him, I should be ambitious to strike forth in fresh directions, to pray more fervently, to give more liberally, to turn duty into delight, to spend and be spent.[1]

Life is a leaf of paper white
Whereon each one of us may write
His word or two, and then comes night.

Greatly begin! though thou have time
But for a line, be that sublime,—
Not failure, but low aim, is crime.[2]

III.

If the streams are so sweet, what will the fountain be? If the King is beautiful in these His lower courts, what must He be when the veils are removed, and the pictures are at an end? Well may the poet sing—

The King there in His beauty
Without a veil is seen;
It were a well-spent journey,
Though seven deaths lay between!

All the bright and blessed things God's people know on earth are but feeble foretastes of the joys of heaven. Yes, I have a word of comfort for thee, aged pilgrim. Thine eyes, often so tear-stained, red with weeping, weary with anxiety, perhaps half-blinded with infirmity, or dim with age, *thine* eyes shall see the King in His beauty. And more than that they shall see the far-stretching land, the undulating plains of heaven, the hills and valleys of the glory-land.

[1] A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place*, p. 41.

[2] J. R. Lowell.

1. Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty. Of all the senses, sight affords us the largest, the most perfect, and the purest fruition. By this marvellous faculty we seem to take actual possession of what we behold. To see what we desire is to enjoy it. It comes nearer than voice or touch; we inwardly embrace and hold it. The eyes dwell on, run over it, feast and are satisfied. What is the single wish of those who have been long separated but to see one another again? What was the exclamation of Jacob when he heard that his beloved and long-lost son was still living? "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die." When the Queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's glory—type as that was of something infinitely higher—"There was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts, and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it." When Simeon beheld the infant Saviour in the Temple, he said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace. . . . For mine eyes have seen thy salvation." To the pure in heart it is promised that they shall see God. When our Lord prayed for His elect before His Passion, He said, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." And St. John says, "Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." To see Him, then, is the final consummation of all. There is nothing more held out to man, as nothing higher could be. For this great vision our whole life here is but a preparation. This is the end of creation, the end of redemption, the end of struggle and victory. They to whom it is vouchsafed will have reached the greatest height and the most perfect bliss that any creature can attain.

¶ Dr. Matthews in his book about Madagascar, where he was for thirty years a missionary, describes this native custom: "The prisoners were kept in chains, but they had to earn their own living, and were confined to prison only during the night. On the days, however, on which the Sovereign appeared they were not allowed to leave the prison; or if allowed out on these days, at noon, before the Sovereign was to appear, they had all to return

to prison, were counted, and locked up. Why? Because if one of those criminals managed to secrete himself, and then emerged from his hiding-place to gaze at and salute the Sovereign as she passed, wearing her diadem and beautiful in the glory of her royal apparel, he was a free man, whatever his crime had been. His chains were at once struck off, for he had looked on the Sovereign in her beauty and saluted her, the salutation being, 'Is it well with you, my Sovereign?' and no one could do that and still remain a prisoner."

2. "They shall behold the far-stretching land." What is heaven? Everybody who cares to call himself a Christian hopes to go to heaven when he dies, and heaven means his idea of happiness. But if we try to get nearer people's thoughts as to what they really understand by heaven, we soon find that it means a different thing to different people, and except to a very few has really only a negative meaning. For instance, people think of the sorrow and the trouble there is in the world, and they say, "Thank God, in heaven there will be no more sorrow nor sighing, for God shall wipe away all tears from off all faces." Or again, they think of the toil and weariness which is the lot of many, and the unkindness which makes so many a life sad, and they look forward to that place, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." And I have heard, too, of people rejoicing in another of the negative joys of heaven, which, though not stated in the Bible, we all feel to be a fact. I have heard people say there will be no sects in heaven, no divisions or strifes, either religious or social. We feel at once that these cannot be where God is, for divisions are the work of sin and selfishness and self-assertion; and God is Love. And others, who feel a longing for knowledge, look forward to the fulfilment of the promise that "there shall be no night there," none of those things which puzzle and confuse and distract us here, but that we shall have risen above and beyond our present partial knowledge, and shall rejoice in the Truth.

If we turn from these negative ideas and ask, What has God revealed to us by His Spirit? we find—

1. Heaven is a happy place. There is no doubt about that. "In thy presence is the fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." It is natural, no doubt, that men should conceive of this happiness as the opposite of all that

makes them unhappy here, let it be sorrow or suffering, or want or sin. But happiness has a deeper meaning. It is simply the condition of that created thing which is doing that for which God created it; realising, as we say, the idea of its being.

2. Heaven is a holy place. It is because it is holy that it is happy. Nothing that defileth can enter in. The Church triumphant, *i.e.* the Church in heaven, is adorned as a Bride for her husband. It is a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

3. And just as it is happy because it is holy, so it is holy because it is the presence-chamber of God. We return to the first part of our text—"Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty." See Him as He is, in all the majesty of holiness and the tenderness of perfect love. We shall all be with Him, and near Him—nay, more than all, "we shall be like him when we see him as he is." That, then, is the great central truth which God has revealed to us about heaven. All else follows from this—the holiness, the happiness, the joy of heaven. "In his Presence there is the fulness of joy." [1]

How know I that it looms lovely that land I have never seen,
With morning-glories and heartease and unexampled green,
With neither heat nor cold in the balm-redolent air?
Some of this, not all, I know; but this is so:
Christ is there.

How know I that blessedness befalls who dwell in Paradise,
The outwearied hearts refreshing, rekindling the worn-out eyes;
All souls singing, seeing, rejoicing everywhere?
Nay, much more than this I know: for this is so:
Christ is there.

O Lord Christ whom having not seen I love and desire to love,
O Lord Christ who lookest on me uncomely yet still Thy dove,
Take me to Thee in Paradise, Thine own made fair:
For whatever else I know, this thing is so:
Thou art there.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

THE FORERUNNER.

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The Forerunner.

The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God.—xl. 3.

All the four Evangelists refer these words to the ministry of St. John the Baptist. In the Baptist they received their highest and complete fulfilment. But their first and historical reference is to the return of the Jewish captives from Babylon. The Lord was the King of the chosen people; and in the vision of the prophet, the promised return to home and freedom was to be a triumphant procession across the desert, headed by Israel's invisible Monarch. The cause of the holy people was the cause of God; their bondage and shame in Babylon, although a heaven-sent punishment, had been a humiliation for the majesty of Jehovah before the face of the scoffing heathen; their triumphant return would be the work of God, it would also be the manifestation of His glory. No obstacle should stop the path of His resistless advance: "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Clearly there is here a wider reach of meaning than any which can be satisfied by the actual prospect or history of the return from Babylon. Say what you will about the highly poetical form into which the prophet has undoubtedly thrown his fervid thought, still here is the thought beneath the form which clothes it. If it would be a degrading mistake to resolve this passage into a mere description of some vast engineering operation: if valleys were not literally to be filled up, and mountains were not literally to be levelled, something, at any

rate, was to take place in the moral, social, or political world which should correspond to this vigorous imagery. And that something was to interest, not merely the Jewish race and their heathen neighbours, but the whole human family: "All flesh shall see it together." It is clear that the particular, local, temporal deliverance melts before the eye of the prophet—as, gazing on it, he describes it—into a deliverance, general and world-wide in its significance, extending in its effects far beyond the limits of time. The deliverance of deliverances is before him. He sees the great escape from bondage, of which all earlier efforts at freedom were but shadows; he sees it afar off, the pathway of mankind across the desert of time from the city of chains and sorrow, whereof Babylon was the earthly type, to the city of freedom and glory imaged in Jerusalem.

And thus it is that the Evangelists so unhesitatingly apply the passage to St. John the Baptist. St. John was the immediate forerunner of the Deliverer of humanity; St. John, as a hermit of the desert and a preacher of repentance, supplied, by his life, the connecting link between the literal and spiritual senses of the prophecy; St. John gathered up in himself, embodied and represented the ages of prediction and expectation. He was the mind of the Old Testament in a concrete form, laying down its office and proclaiming its work of preparation finished, when the Reality which it foreshadowed had come.[1]

¶ The prophet's mind is haunted by the vision of perfectness. He has seen it. Not in some dream of shadowy romance has his mind toyed with the bright imagination, but in his hours of deepest commerce with the unseen has this great thing been unveiled, and he has gazed upon its holy beauty. It may lie in dim distances. It may be the final issue of many a bitter conflict and many a dreadful struggle. It may tax the faith, and try the hope, and wear away the strength of generations of holy men and women before its fine glory shall be translated into the actual fact of life. But there it is—a profound and actual reality. His inspired imagination has run forward to greet it, his sometime despondent heart has rested in its certainty. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." That is the revelation, that the certainty, the hope, and the joy. The world may have no eyes for the glory of the vision, the wise may

[1] A. L. Moore.

be deaf to the Voice that declared it. The cynic may burst into ironic laughter, and the coarse interpret its holy prophecy in terms of madness. But goodness ever has its own vision. The prophet has ever been the man with eyes in his soul. He can sing with Abt Vogler—

> But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear;
> The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know.

One holy vision fills his mind and heart—there is a perfectness which is dowered with supremacy, beauty, and abidingness. And ultimately that shall surely triumph.[1]

I.

The Need of Deliverance.

1. The herald and hastener of a better and holier day must be distinguished first by a profound sense of the evil of the present. The prophet was no blind optimist cherishing a foolish hope of a better and happier future, because he did not see the abounding evils around him. He saw with clear, penetrating eyes, the moral and spiritual degradation of his nation and day; saw how king and priests and people were, with few exceptions, eaten with idolatry as with a cancer. He speaks of it, aye, and of the national evils which must issue from it—exile, defeat, the overthrow of their beautiful city. That is true of the prophetic band from first to last—from Elijah to John. They saw, they were oppressed by, the evils in Church and State—were almost overwhelmed by them—and rose up in indignant condemnation. They pointed out the unescapable issue of the evil they saw, and demanded a return to a simpler and purer life. Elijah, with trumpet voice, demands: "How long halt ye?" And John lifts up his voice in the desert and bids men "flee from the wrath to come." A profound sense of the sinfulness of sin, and of the wrath of God which abides perpetually upon it, distinguishes those who were the "road-makers" of past ages. I do not say it was not shared by many of their countrymen, but it is as true of these men as it is of men of our own day—the holier and the more consecrated to God feel the evil and the sin most. They

[1] G. B. Austin, *The Beauty of Goodness*, p. 190.

see the mountains of injustice that need to be levelled, the abysses of vice to be filled in, the crookedness, falsity of social life, the inequalities which make the existence of myriads a life-long martyrdom.

2. What then was the evil which Christ was to conquer in man and for man? It was sin. Sin is the one real evil. It is certainly worse than pain, since pain may become a good. It is certainly worse than death, since death is only the effect of sin, and may be the gate of freedom. It is worse even than the devil, since it makes the devil to be what he is. The devil would be powerless, and death would have no sting, and pain would be unknown, if it were not for sin. But sin is not a thing always palpable to and recognised by the sinner. It is, says Liddon, like the peculiar atmosphere in which we pass the great part of our lives here in Oxford. Looking down upon our homes from the top of Shotover, we see the thick damp fog burying this city and valley beneath a shroud of unwholesome vapour; but here in the streets of Oxford we scarcely observe it hanging in the sunlight, except when it becomes excessive in the depth of winter. Sin is just such a mist as this: it is a fog, a blight, impalpable yet real, about us, around us, within us. It bathes our moral life on this side and that, and withal it blinds us to the fact of its existence. If man would take a true measure of sin, he must be lifted out of it; he must ascend to some moral eminence, whence its real character will be made plain to him, and where he may form strong resolutions to close with any offer of deliverance and escape from its importunity and thraldom. Now such an eminence was supplied in early days by the gift of a moral law. The law did not add to the stock of existing evil, but it drew the unsuspected latent sin of man forth into the daylight; it irritated into intense vigour the principle of opposition which, even when dormant, is ever so strong in sinful human nature, and which shows itself, under the irritation, in its true light as sin. The law was like those remedies in medicine which rid us of a disease by bringing it to the surface, or, as we say, by precipitating it; it forced man to see what he really is, and to forget what he had fancied himself to be. "By the law is the knowledge of sin."

3. But men must be *convinced* of the evil and of the need

of deliverance from it. Take an illustration. We know that in this country no political measure that really touches the interests of the people can receive the sanction and the force of law, unless the people themselves are convinced that the evils which the measure proposes to remedy are substantial and not fancy evils. No legislative genius on the part of the minister can dispense with this condition of success. If the country is not convinced that the measure is necessary, the minister must take measures that will produce this conviction. He must hold meetings; he must make speeches; he must write dissertations; he must deal in dry statistical demonstrations and in vehemently passionate appeals; he must set in motion all the complicated machinery of political agitation and enterprise which may be at his disposal. Supposing him to be himself satisfied of the necessity of the measure in contemplation, this is nothing more than his duty to his country; he would fail of that duty if he should neglect to diffuse, according to the best of his power, that amount of political information which is necessary to his success.

You will not understand me to be saying that here we have a strict and absolute analogy to the sacred matter immediately before us; because it is plain that the correspondence fails in a most vital particular. We all know that the enactment of a new law in a free country is, in reality, the act not of the legislature but of the people; the legislature is only the instrument of the popular will. But the redemption of the world is in no wise the work of redeemed man; Christ is the one Redeemer, in whose redemptive triumph man could have no part save that of accepting and sharing its blessings. Yet this deliberate acceptance of Christ's Redemption by man is of vital necessity to man; man is not saved against or without his will to be saved; and it is therefore of the last importance that he should understand his need of the salvation which he must desire and accept.

4. And not only must men be convinced of the need of deliverance, but the Church (taking the forerunner's place) must prepare for the coming of the Deliverer. In the language of the prophet, it is the business of the Church to prepare a highway for Him in the desert. This is a very significant statement, for the world resents the idea that it is a desert and not fit to receive

the Saviour when He comes to it. The tendency of all human systems of religion, in these days at least, is to make the best of whatever there is found among men. It is popular to say that there is a great deal of good in the world after all. That is false, however, except so far as the Gospel has won its way into the hearts of men. The world is essentially evil. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father," says the apostle. Men lose sight of this fact, that the whole world lies in sin, and that God is displeased with it. There is no inherent goodness in it that can be brought out into the light and cherished and developed until it becomes a valuable auxiliary of the work of the Church. No, the world is a desert, and its barrenness and worthlessness are brought out into sharp relief by the "highway" which is to be constructed right through it by the servants of God.

The servants of God have not only to build this highway through the desert, but they have also to make it straight and level, for the Lord's unhindered progress into the hearts of men. For there are many obstacles to the spread of the Kingdom interposed by the world, and every one of them has to be met by the Church and vanquished.

(1) Every valley is to be exalted. That is, the lowlands of indifference and sordid worldliness are to be filled up and raised to the Gospel level. Divine truth is the great enlightener and quickener of the world. The vast masses of mankind are indeed sunk in sin and shame, but it is largely because they have been left so long in the pit, in the swampy places of every sort of misery and degradation, that they have lost hope. They but strive to get through the days of this world's life without grievous want of food or shelter, and that is all. Nothing could be more pitiful than the hopeless misery and stolid indifference of the teeming millions of earth's poor. If Christ is to come into their lives, they must first be inspired to look up and realise that better things are possible, that their condition need not be so wretched, as it is only for the few years of this world's span, and then every good and pleasant thing may be theirs in eternity, if they but ally themselves with the gracious Redeemer who passes through their midst along this high road.

(2) Not only are the valleys to be exalted, but the mountains and hills are to be made low. These mountains and hills are the prejudices and self-satisfied ignorance of men, their wilful ways and false systems, which they choose to think are better than the Gospel, or in any case equally good with it. They will not suffer their creeds and philosophies and ideals to be beaten down. Yet this is just what the Church has to do if she is to prepare the straight path for our Lord. Every human system upon which men pride themselves is hostile to the Gospel. It must be broken down if Christ our Lord is to possess their hearts. The wise one must surrender the fine-spun conceit of his theories and hypotheses, and bow to the authority of the Gospel. And so it becomes the business of the Church in every way possible to overcome the false systems and notions which oppose Divine truth, that the Master's paths into the hearts of men may be levelled.

(3) Again, the crooked places are to be made straight. How many of these there are, and what a Herculean task it seems to be to try to overcome in men's minds the opposition they have to the Divine religion because of the inscrutable things in nature and in life's experiences. Therefore the servants of God who would make straight His path have to be striving, with tireless patience, to show their troubled neighbours that there is wisdom in all manner of circumstances which at first sight appear merciless and capricious.

(4) Once more, God's servants are called to make the world's rough places plain. How many places there are, and how cruelly rough they often are also. We have to contend against this just as much in the Church as without, for alas, Christians so seldom seem to illustrate the Christ-spirit in their lives, in their daily intercourse with one another. As the apostle says, they bite and devour one another; so much so that it is proverbial that ecclesiastical quarrels are the most bitter of all. It is no easy task to soften hard hearts, to comfort sore hearts, to persuade men that there is something better in the Master's religion than they see exemplified commonly in the lives of believers. Yet there is no sort of labour more fruitful in results than this. The constant effort to speak kindly, to act lovingly, to be gracious and sympathetic; slow to take offence, quick to make up—such

things as these move men more strongly than any words of argument to embrace the Divine religion. Thus by making the rough places plain do we wonderfully make straight the highway for our Lord in the desert of this world.

¶ There is scarcely one good road throughout the length and breadth of Palestine. Travellers, as they manage to pass their horses with difficulty along the wretched highways, or choose some adjacent path over the open plain as far preferable to the road itself, often wonder whence come the huge rough stones which so constantly obstruct the way. I was at a great loss to account for the presence of these, until my attention was called, by W. Schick, our able architect at Jerusalem, to the manner in which many of them are brought there. The camel, horse, and mule drivers, when they find the burdens they have arranged on the backs of their sumpter animals are not equally poised, instead of rearranging them, have a cruel and senseless custom of seizing any large stone which comes to hand, and placing it on that side where the weight is deficient. This stone in time jolts off, and is replaced by another and often by a third and a fourth, and in any case, at the journey's end or when the animals are unloaded, is left where it falls in the midst of the way. Besides this, in cleaning the vineyards, gardens, and arable land, stones are constantly thrown out on to the nearest road. None of the highways, moreover, are at any time properly metalled, and in winter they suffer very severely from the tropical torrents of rain. Neither is there any adequate provision for keeping them in permanent order, even if they were efficiently made. Yet, notwithstanding the almost impassable condition of the highways at ordinary times, I have repeatedly showed that on a few occasions for brief intervals they were carefully mended. These few occasions were those of the arrival of some royal personages. As soon as it was known at Jerusalem that a king or prince of the blood was about to come through any of the adjacent parts of Palestine which lie within that pashalic, orders were forthwith issued to the people of the various towns and villages to put all the roads in order over which it was arranged he should pass. This was done as usual by means of enforced labour, as was probably the case in former times.[1]

¶ When I was a boy I sometimes used to stay at a little farm in the country, and of the many delights of my holiday there, I do not think that any were more delightful than a ride in the farmer's cart. The farmer's cart had no springs under it; the tub was fixed straight to the axle, and when it came to ruts or rough places upon the road we knew it. Sometimes we went down with

[1] James Neil, *Palestine Explored.*

such a sudden jerk that we were almost jerked out of the cart. Well, I used to like that jolting; I did not mind at all those rough places in the road. But I find that as people get on in life they do not like these shakings up; they prefer to go along easily and smoothly. And when people in Brighton want to go for a ride in a cab or carriage, they always look out for one that has written on the lamps, "Rubber Tyres." You see, the rubber tyres on the wheels make the rough places plain; that is, they take off the friction; they lessen the unpleasant jolting, and people's nerves are not so strained as they would be if they went along the road in an old cart like the one I used to enjoy going for a ride in, that was fastened to the axle without springs between or rubber tyres on the wheels. Well, now, I want you to remember that the road of life is rough for most people, and it is rough sometimes even for boys and girls. It is possible for us all to do something to make life easier, to take away the friction and the unpleasantness of life, and to make it more pleasant and more enjoyable for those going over the road.[1]

II.

The Deliverer.

The discovery of man's deep need was accompanied by another discovery, the revelation of a Deliverance. The hopes of man are as ancient as his despondency. At the gates of Eden was given the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. We interpret that promise, and rightly enough, in the light of its fulfilment. But when it was given it might have seemed vague, and capable of many interpretations; nothing was certain except that man's deliverance would in some way be wrought out through humanity itself. Around this promise all the faith and hope of the earliest ages gathered, and from this point gradually narrows and becomes definite as it proceeds to unfold its true interpretation, until at length, when Isaiah and Zechariah had spoken, the whole life and sufferings of Jesus Christ had been written by anticipation.

¶ For myself, I am a social optimist, simply because I am a Christian; because I am not willing to take up the cry which the pessimist and the social cynic desire to put into my mouth. The sky is not black, but bright with the Christmas star which

[1] D. J. Llewellyn.

announces the advent of a King, of a Ruler of men—Christ Jesus—not reigning merely supreme in far-off splendour in the glory of the heavenly palaces, but King in England to-day, by His Spirit inspiring, illuminating, transfiguring life, the great Companion, full of love and sympathy for all the sorrows and sufferings of the poor, full of care and concern also for the wider good of the commonweal—the Reformer, the Emancipator of the captive and of the oppressed, the Champion of social right and the Inspirer of social duty. And I am a social optimist also because I am an Englishman; because I believe in what Burke once called "the inbred integrity and piety of the English people"; because it is bred into my very bone, as I expect it is bred into yours, that somehow with Englishmen things cannot go permanently wrong, but are bound to worry through in the end.[1]

¶ It is an old commonplace of divinity, which we are strangely forgetting, that despair is the only utter perdition; because despair binds a man in the prison of his own evil nature, and fastens the chain of the evil spirit upon him; because all hope points upwards to God, and is the response of our spirit to His Spirit. Therefore I say it again, we ought to stir up hope in every human being. Hope for present help from God to overcome the sin that most easily besets him; hope that he shall be able to say to the mountain which now stands in his way, "Remove, and be cast into the sea"; hope for the future that the glory of God, the Deliverer, shall be fully revealed; and that he, being included in the "all flesh" of which the prophet writes, bearing that nature in and for which Christ died, shall be able to see it and rejoice in it.[2]

1. What is the "straight" line to heaven? Far, far away is the eternal, electing love of God. The visible starting-place is a sense of sin, and a sincere desire for pardon and peace with God. Next is a feeling of forgiveness through the mercy of God by the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This leads on to peace. And then peace runs into love. And love goes on into a new and holy life,—a life dedicate, a life loving, a life of usefulness, a life for heaven. This line of life grows broader and broader as it goes on. And it also grows humbler and humbler, till it is all Christ, and no self. And so it brings the traveller to heaven. And not to stay there, but to go on, in the same line, *straighter still*, perfectly "straight," for ever and ever!

[1] C. W. Stubbs, Bishop of Truro.

[2] F. D. Maurice, *Sermons preached in Lincoln's Inn Chapel*, i. p. 164.

Thus the "straight" line is—repentance, pardon, peace, love, holiness, usefulness, humility, heaven. Each runs into the other; and they make one line.

¶ "The rough places smooth!" Did it ever happen to you to know some very rough man, illiterate, coarse, hard, who became a Christian? You saw, you could not help seeing, the wonderful change! How soft, how gentle, how refined that hard man became. The whole being of that man was "smooth." The "rough places" were made "plain." You may be perfectly conscious that there is much in yourself which is very "rough"; much that grates and irritates; much that is most unlike your Master, and often very grievous to yourself. "Rough" ways of speaking; "rough" judgments; "rough" looks; "rough" actions. You regret them afterwards. But the "roughness" is still there. It breaks out again. What shall you do? Think of the gentle Jesus! Often have before your eyes His calm, holy, peaceful look. Cling to Him. Unite yourself to Him. Ask Him to do it, and it will be done. He will make an Advent into your heart. And the more He comes, the more certain is the result. He will bring quietness. He will make your "rough" places "smooth." Or, it may be thus: Perhaps there are many "roughnesses" now in your path; jars in daily life; "rough" persons with whom you have to do; "rough" circumstances; "roughening" troubles; vexatious annoyances. The whole discipline of life is "rough" to you! It is astonishing how Christ can, and will, turn those "rough" edges, if you will ask Him! If He but throw in His calming presence, and pass over it all His smoothing hand, the "rough" places will soon be "smooth"! The waters will soon settle down when He speaks "Peace"! Believe it. It is in the covenant. "The rough places shall be made smooth."[1]

2. There are *many* advents of the Son of God, and for every one of them there is some forerunner, some voice crying in the wilderness: "Prepare ye His way; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." His comings mark the great upward strides of humanity towards a nobler, freer, purer life; they are the occasions when the bonds of the past are broken, and the world moves swiftly towards its Divine goal. The greatest and most hopeful epochs of history have been those when the religious spirit, which is the Spirit of God moving in the hearts of men, has been quickened and purified. The voice

[1] J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, Sept. 1881 to April 1882, p. 107.

of some John the Baptist has gone ringing through the wilderness of a dead faith, of a formal worship, of a worldly life, and men have been startled into attention, have been made conscious of shortcomings and sins, have broken up the fallow ground of their hearts, have sown to the Lord in righteousness, and have reaped the golden harvest of a Divine spiritual life.

¶ Let me remind you of three cardinal instances in which living sympathy has prepared the way for Christ's triumphal entry into the heart of a generation.

(1) Why was it that while other apostles presented Christ in other ways—as Messiah, as Judge, as Healer—Paul determined to know nothing but Christ crucified? Not because His Gospel, as he calls it, was the whole of the Divine message, but because the language of sacrifice was the common speech of all mankind. Differing in all else, Jew and Greek, barbarian and Scythian, were one in this, that they regarded sacrifice as the central means of grace. While other aspects of the Saviour might appeal to this class or that nation, this one touched the springs which move the universal heart of humanity. And so it was not James or Peter, but Paul, whose picture of the Christ won the homage of the world.

(2) In Italy, at the end of the twelfth century, Christian faith was all but extinct. So entirely were priests and rulers given up to hatred and greed and luxury that the few humble communities which aimed at a purer life were hunted as heretics. The mass of the people, despised, oppressed and corrupt, lived in one dumb longing for pity. Then came an apostle who, from the storehouse of Christ's words of power, drew that which they needed—"Blessed are the poor!" When he claimed Poverty for his bride, Francis of Assisi enacted a parable which all the poor could understand. To choose the life of poverty was to choose that which bound the sad millions to each other. It was to proclaim himself the brother of all. It was to rob poverty of its sting by making it a bond of love. The life and words of St. Francis are one long poem, in which Christ is presented as the Lord of pity. From him men learned once more that the Kingdom of God is the kingdom of love; once more they became its willing subjects; once more there was a Christian Italy—a Christian Europe.

(3) But not for long. The glorious revival of the thirteenth century was followed by a long decay of faith and morals. The Renaissance which restored the art and the learning of the ancient world, restored its vices too. An ignorant and corrupt priesthood not only oppressed the people, but degraded them; for they taught that all forms of secular life were profane, and none truly accept-

able to God but their own celibate idleness. In Southern lands laymen accepted their degradation, and religion became a mockery. But in Germany, in Switzerland, in England, and wherever men had Teutonic blood in their veins, the old German faith in personal value persisted. Outraged manhood led them to scorn the priests, and almost to renounce the religion which was an excuse for the domination. Then God raised up an apostle from among the labouring poor who could understand and convert them. Convert them not by condemning their errors or denouncing their excesses, but by showing them that all their just claims were allowed and satisfied by the ancient teaching of the Church. The doctrine of justification by faith, which Luther drew from Paul's forgotten writings, meant release from the tyranny of the Confessional, meant the recognition of each man's conscience, and the consecration of each man's life.[1]

3. As the life of the Church of Christ is developed, as its organisation and its methods are kept simply as instruments for the spirit of faith and love to work through, the Church will become less and less dependent upon the zealous efforts of any man to inaugurate reforms and to lead onward movements. The influence of the one man seems to correspond with the generally low and enslaved condition of the mass of the people; great when the people are most needy; comparatively small when the people are more free and more able to help themselves. John the Baptist is a unique, a commanding figure, because the age in which he prophesied was so destitute of spiritual men. Martin Luther is an imposing presence because, until he began to preach, the people, not having the knowledge of God and of His Christ, were abject enough to bow down to a corrupt Church which they hated and despised. John Wesley and George Whitefield stand out conspicuously from a mass of clergymen and ministers of the last century because the Gospel was then so little known, ministers so rarely experienced its power, and the people were in such gross darkness. I greatly doubt whether in our country such forerunners of the Kingdom of God will appear again, simply because I think that the conditions of our Church life are so highly favourable to upward movements springing from a *general sense of need.*[2]

[1] M. G. Glazebrook, in *The Church Family Newspaper*, March 24, 1910, p. 248.
[2] J. P. Gledstone, in *Christian World Pulpit*, xxxiv. p. 183.

¶ It is wonderful to see how sensitive the Church of to-day has become to her condition, to her reputation, and to her efficiency. If there is backsliding, there is always a reprover at hand; if there is a low standard of attainment, there is always some one to urge her forward to higher graces; if there is inefficiency in any department of service, there is always some active, enterprising spirit prepared to supply the lack and do the necessary work. If one Church declines, another grows; if one denomination passes by any field of usefulness, another steps in and occupies it. If the Churches at home were to prove unfaithful, they would be rebuked and stimulated by those abroad. If the ministry becomes cold and formal, the Press utters the complaints of the hungry, starving flock. So much work is now cast upon the Church, her enterprises have carried her into so many lands, and require so many workers and such enormous revenues, that she can maintain her ground only by a life of faith. Faith brought her into this goodly land, and by nothing but faith can she retain it. Yet mere retention is not enough. She must make fresh advances; she lives by growth. To stand still is to die. Thus is she continually cast upon God, and to be cast upon Him is to find His faithfulness and truth.[1]

4. What the world requires most of all is a revelation of the glory of God. The material progress which we have been describing is what many people mean when they speak of "the civilisation of the nineteenth century," and yet that which has lamentably failed to bless our own people is sometimes vaunted as the best message we can send to the heathen. Many say, "Let our trade, and our railways, and all our conveniences first find entrance to a heathen land, and then the people there will be prepared for the Gospel." A grosser delusion could hardly be promulgated. Our own social condition might show its fallacy, and experiment in heathen lands has confirmed it. When Christianity has gone first (as to the South Seas), morality, and contentment, and safety have been generated with a simple religious faith, whose earnestness puts us to shame. But when this so-called "civilisation" has preceded Christianity, idolaters have become atheists, and their last state is worse than their first. Now, as our text puts it, the great object we Christians are to keep in view, in all our achievements and enterprises, is that "the glory of God" may be revealed—not, you observe, the

[1] J. P. Gledstone, in *Christian World Pulpit*, xxxiv. p. 183.

glory of man, not the glory of a society, not the glory of a sect, but the glory of God. And what do we understand by that? Certainly no burst of light upon the world such as that which overwhelmed Saul of Tarsus, nor any new and supernatural revelation, but a fulfilment of the Saviour's words about His disciples, "I am glorified in them." As a king, a man finds his glory in the contentment of his people; as a father, a man finds his glory in the well-being of his children; and so the great King and Father of us all finds His "glory" in our contentment and well-being. And how can that be brought about? It is by the work and words of those who speak "comfortably" to the sinners, who proclaim a reconciled God revealed in Jesus Christ, who declare to all who in penitence will accept it, that "iniquity is pardoned," and that it is possible for all flesh to see the salvation of God.[1]

¶ We have produced, during the last fifty years, says Bishop Stubbs, agitators of the John the Baptist type, from John Bright down to John Burns, and they have most of them done noble preparatory work; but we have now to produce, if we can, and from the same classes, admirable administrators, who are quite a different kind of people, a new order of men, a new religious order, shall I say?—men who, whilst believing in the possibilities of democratic control, know how essential to efficient administration are all the qualities which are of Christian character, justice, patience, hope, modesty, integrity, frankness, and fellowship. We want, in fact, as great a change, it seems to me, in our conception of the essential qualities which go to make an able public man, a vestry politician even, as Browning described in the wonderful picture he gave of the true function of a poet, which he called, "How it strikes a Contemporary." Indeed, now I come to think of it, I am not sure that Browning's poet is not quite the kind of man we want for our county councillors and politicians. Do you remember Browning's lines—

> I only knew one poet in my life:
> And this, or something like it, was his way.
>
> You saw him up and down Valladolid,
> A man of mark, to know next time you saw.
>
> He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane,
> Scenting the world, looking it full in the face.

[1] A. Rowland.

He turned up, now, the alley by the church,
That leads nowhither; now, he breathed himself
On the main promenade just at the wrong time:
You'd come upon his scrutinising hat,
Making a peaked shade blacker than itself
Against the single window spared some house
Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work,—
Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick
Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks
Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.
He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade.

He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,
And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.
He took such cognisance of men and things,
If any beat a horse, you felt he saw;
If any cursed a woman, he took note;
Yet stared at nobody,—you stared at him,
And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,
He seemed to know you and expect as much.

The town's true master if the town but knew!
We merely kept the governor for form,
While this man walked about and took account
Of all thought, said and acted, then went home,
And wrote it fully to our Lord the King.

God's Waiting Ones.

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God's Waiting Ones.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.—xl. 31.

In speaking to the heart of Jerusalem the great prophet of the Exile spoke a word which will always be in season to them that are weary, and to such as are engaged in great undertakings. An earlier prophet had seen a vision of dry bones, the emblems of a dead people, to whom he was commissioned to promise a renewal of national life. He had spoken to these dry bones; the Spirit of God had breathed upon them; and as the heavenly wind swept through the stifling valley of death the scattered bones came together, joint to joint, and flesh came upon them, and breath came into them, and they stood up a great army. Now the new prophet has to speak to the awakening people in the early hours of their reviving national life and aspirations, and he has to comfort them amongst the fears which imperil the great enterprise for which they have been revived. And all through this chapter he deals with them. There is the profound sense of guilt, and he deals with that, assuring them of forgiveness.

There is the dread of the great heathen empires which have broken and seem unbreakable, and he deals with that, and shows how these great kings and judges and empires are but as dust in the balance and their gods are silent. Yes, he has to speak to them in the beginnings of their rethinking out the situation. They are alive many of them, but most of them are only just alive; and as the sensations experienced by those who are coming out of a swoon are practically the same as the feelings of those who are sinking into one, the prophet pictures some of

these men as lying prone upon the ground, prostrate and motionless, and the clammy dews of faintness upon their brows. They are unable to rise, and as they lie there he bids them at least lift up their eyes and look up into the heavens and consider these things. Who hath created all these things? Hast thou, Jacob, not known? Hast thou not heard? The Everlasting Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary. . . . He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.

The prophet was not only consoling prostrate and decrepit souls; there were some among them who not only had awakened, but had received a new-born strength, and were eager to attempt the heroic task of national restoration. His one desire was to save them from the disastrous, but not uncommon, mistake of supposing that this feeling of strength and power and fitness is a sufficient indication that they carry in themselves an adequate and permanent reserved strength, without replenishment from outside. He proclaims to them the universal law of creature life. Man at his best estate rapidly expends his energy of body and mind and soul, and must utterly fail unless replenished; and so, he says, even the youths—using a term which, to Hebrew ears, would designate the period, say, from about fourteen to twenty—even the youths, still growing lads, the almost men, those who are in the freshest time of life, when the step is full of spring and all activity is joy, even these, he says, will faint and grow weary before this great enterprise has been accomplished. The chosen men, picked men, young men—because young men are the picked men for such enterprises—the chosen, picked men of their generation, the elect of all those who have reached that period when activity and staying power are best combined with acquired skill and discipline, even these shall utterly fall. But are they, therefore, to sit down supinely? Having fallen shall they lie still, and groan that all is over? No! cries the clarion voice of the prophet, for God is not weary, God is not faint, and they that wait on Him, though not exempted from the law of decline, shall experience the law of revival; "they that wait on Him shall renew their strength." Let them lift up their voices to God, let them make their prayer unto Him, and then wealth and want, strength and weakness,

God and man, shall meet together and find a common blessedness in giving and receiving might.

¶ A ship is stuck on a mud-bank; and, the tide going out, it careens over, and there it lies, like many discouraged Christians. They do not need to anchor. The anchor is out, though. By and by the tide begins to come in, little by little. The captain calls up the crew, and orders them to hoist in the anchor. It is hoisted in and stowed away. "Trim the sails," is the next command; and that is obeyed. The tide is still coming in, coming in, coming in; and by and by the vessel floats off, and the crew look up with admiration and say, "What a captain we have! It was the hauling in of the anchor and the trimming of the sails that saved us. The captain gave his orders, they were obeyed, and then she floated." No, it was not the captain's doings. The Lord God who swings the stars through the heavens, and exerts His power upon the ocean, did it. The captain merely foresaw the coming of the tide, and adapted the circumstances of the vessel to influences which existed before.[1]

I.

They that wait upon the Lord.

To wait *for* Jehovah, or to wait *on* Jehovah, has in the mouth of the pious Israelite a very definite, specific meaning, very different from the general sense of our expressions "to have faith in God," "to trust in the Lord," at least as generally used. The typical passage is Gen. xlix. 18, "I have waited, or I *wait* for thy salvation, O Jehovah." On this the Jerusalem Targum says: "But not upon the salvation of Gideon, the son of Joas, does my soul gaze, because that is temporal; not to the salvation wrought by Samson, the son of Manoah, is my longing directed, because that is transitory; but upon the salvation which Thou in Thy Word hast promised to bring to Thy people, the seed of Israel. Unto Thy salvation, Jehovah, unto the salvation of Messiah, the son of David, who at some future time will deliver Israel, and restore them from their exile, unto *that* salvation my looking and my longing are directed, because Thy salvation is an eternal salvation." In other words, the thought is connected with the promise of redemption, *that* redemption, that salvation, which was to be brought about by

[1] H. W. Beecher.

the coming and presence and manifestation of Jehovah as the Deliverer, the Redeemer, the Saviour of His people.[1]

But waiting upon the Lord may now be taken in a more comprehensive way, and as covering three great acts of life.

1. It means *Prayer*. It means much more than an occasional supplication, however real; it means persistent, persevering, continual prayer; it means an abiding attitude of trustful dependence upon God; it means all that is wrapped up in those beautiful words we love to hear sung, "O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him"; it means trust in the Lord and do good; it means trust in the Lord at all times, for with Him is everlasting strength, and have no confidence in self. But the prophet has a deeper thought than this. There are many things for which we can only ask and then wait in quiet stillness, things which we cannot help God to give us, things which God Himself bestows without our aid, if we are ever to possess them. There are times when the soul is so utterly spent that God bends over our voiceless misery as the Good Samaritan bent over the speechless Jew, and not waiting for those trembling pallid lips to ask, poured oil and wine into his wounds, and lifted up his almost passive frame, and set him on his own beast.

The praying spirit can be granted to a man as his soul is in the attitude of prayer. Then we are like a bird with outstretched pinions, poised betwixt earth and heaven, waiting in the atmosphere of God for the knowledge of the work we have to do. And as the bird descends to the nest on the earth which it can see from afar, so we should descend to our duties unperceived except we were on high with God. There, the heart open to God, the soul responsive to His influences, lifted above the meanness of earth, we get a true perspective of our duty; we have a high courage, we see what is required of us, and seeing, we descend to do it. It is easy for us in our hours of silent communion with God to feel the meaning of things—the meaning never put into words, for heaven comes near and illuminates earth. Nay, rather we discover that earth and heaven are one.

[1] A. H. Huizinga, in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, v. p. 89.

And when in silent awe we wait
And word and sign forbear,
The hinges of the golden gate
Move soundless to our prayer.

¶ During the great Welsh revival, it is said a minister was marvellously successful in his preaching. He had but one sermon, but under it hundreds of men were saved. Far away from where he lived, in a lonely valley, news of this wonderful success reached a brother preacher. Forthwith he became anxious to find out the secret of this success. He started out, and walked the long and weary road, and, at length, reaching the humble cottage where the good minister lived, he said, "Brother, where did you get that sermon?" He was taken into a poorly furnished room, and pointed to a spot where the carpet was worn shabby and bare, near a window that looked out towards the solemn mountains, and the minister said, "Brother, that is where I got that sermon. My heart was heavy for men. One evening I knelt there, and cried for power to preach as I had never preached before. The hours passed until midnight struck, and the stars looked down on a sleeping valley and the silent hills; but the answer came not, so I prayed on until at length I saw a faint grey shoot up in the east; presently it became silver, and I watched and prayed until the silver became purple and gold, and on all the mountain crests blazed the altar fires of the new day; and then the sermon came, and the power came, and I lay down and slept, and arose and preached, and scores fell down before the fire of God; that is where I got that sermon."[1]

¶ In the year 1861 the Southern States of America were filled with slaves and slaveholders. It was proposed to make Abraham Lincoln president. But he had resolved that if he came to that position of power he would do all he could to wipe away the awful scourge from the page of his nation's history. A rebellion soon became imminent, and it was expected that in his inaugural address much would be said respecting it. The time came. The Senate House was packed with people; before him was gathered the business skill and the intellectual power of the States. With one son lying dead in the White House, whom he loved with a fond father's affection; another little boy on the borders of eternity; with his nation's eternal disgrace or everlasting honour resting upon his speech, he speaks distinctly, forcefully, and without fear. Friend and foe marvel at his collected movements. They know of the momentous issues which hang on his address. They know

[1] G. H. Morgan, *Modern Knights-Errant*, p. 100.

the domestic trials that oppress his heart. But they do not know that, before leaving home that morning, the President had taken down the family Bible and conducted their home worship as usual, and then had asked to be left alone. The family withdrawing, they heard his tremulous voice raised in pleadings with God, that He whose shoulder sustains the government of worlds would guide him and overrule his speech for His own glory. Here was the secret of this man's strength.[1]

2. It means *Faith*. The original word means to "fully trust" or "strongly hope," to believe that the thing hoped for will be effected, and so to wait patiently and steadily till it is done. It has nothing to do, therefore, with the off-putting of the impenitent; nor with the apathy, indolence, and indifference that too often creep over believers themselves. To wait upon the Lord, instead of being a weak or languid form of faith, is the form that shows most of its endurance and power. No doubt it is an expression which brings out the quiet side of the spiritual life. But our text states this important and too much forgotten secret of that life—that it is just such quiet confidence in God that maintains and revives grace in the soul.

¶ "They that wait upon the Lord" is Old Testament dialect for what in New Testament phraseology is meant by "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." For the notion expressed here by "waiting" is that of expectant dependence, and the New Testament "faith" is the very same in its attitude of expectant dependence, while the object of the Old Testament "waiting," Jehovah, is identical with the object of the New Testament "faith," which fastens on God manifest in the flesh, the Man Jesus Christ. Therefore, I am not diverting the language of my text from its true meaning, but simply opening its depth, when I say that the condition of the inflow of this unwearied and immortal life into our poor, fainting, dying humanity is simply the trust in Jesus Christ the Redeemer of our souls. True, the revelation has advanced, the contents of that which we grasp are more developed and articulate, blessed be God! True, we know more about Jehovah, when we see Him in Jesus Christ, than Isaiah did. True, we have to trust in Him as dying on the Cross for our salvation and as the pattern and example in His humanity of all nobleness and beauty for young or old, but the Christ is the "same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." And the faith that knit the furthest back of the saints of old to the Jehovah whom they dimly knew, is in essence identical

[1] G. H. Morgan, *Modern Knights-Errant*, p. 104.

with the faith that binds my poor, sinful heart to the Christ that died and that lives for my redemption and salvation.[1]

¶ Waiting upon the Lord is not merely a passing call, but an abiding in Him. Waiting is not so much a transient action as a permanent attitude. It is not the restless vagrant calling at the door for relief, it is rather the intimacy of the babe at the breast.[2]

3. It means *Service.* Waiting upon the Lord means not only praying and trusting, it means doing His commandments, like the angels, who because they do them excel in strength, hearkening to the voice of His Word. These winged messengers of His are waiting upon God as truly when they fly to the uttermost parts of His dominions as when they veil their faces with their wings before the central throne; and so the man who is filled with the Lord, and relies upon Divine help, is as truly waiting on the Lord when he goes out from his chamber strengthened in purpose to do the right and to obey the golden rule to keep God's name hallowed in business, and wherever he may be to do nothing which shall add to the burdens of his neighbours, nothing to make faith harder for the unbeliever, nothing to make life harder for the saint. The man who goes out to do the common work of the world, trusting in God to help him to endure the hardness and the temptation, and to come off more than conqueror, is waiting on the Lord when he engages with all his heart and mind and strength, in the discharge of these common duties, as when in a locked chamber he kneels with clasped hands before the unseen Throne of Grace.

Waiting is not an idle and impassive thing. When the Bible speaks of waiting upon God, it means something different from doing nothing. We commonly contrast waiting with working, and there is a sense in which the contrast is a just one; but if it leads us to think that waiting is *not* working, it has done wrong to a great Bible word. Think, for example, of the Cabinet minister whose duty it is to wait upon the king. Is that an idle or a sauntering business? Can it be entered on without a thought? Will it not rather claim the whole attention, and make the statesman eager and alert? For *him,* at any rate, waiting is not idleness; rather it is the crown of all his toil. I

[1] A. Maclaren, *The Unchanging Christ,* p. 17.
[2] J. H. Jowett, *The Silver Lining,* p. 131.

have heard soldiers say that in a battle the hardest thing is not the final rush. In that wild moment a man forgets himself and is caught into a mad tumult of enthusiasm. The hardest thing is to stand quiet and wait, while the hail of the enemy's fire is whistling round—to wait in the darkness and in the face of death, and be forbidden to return the fire. It is that which tries the nerves and tests the heart. It is that which shows the stuff that men are made of. In such an hour a man is not asleep—he is intensely and tremendously alive.

¶ Sometimes we do not know what to do—it is not clear; you possibly have come to a cross, to a division in the road, and you are at a loss clearly to see the way and to decide upon what you ought to do; it wants strength of mind to be content to wait, to be content to be still.

There is a great deal in that expression of St. Paul's, "Study to be quiet." Why, one might think, we may certainly be quiet without any very great study. It is a great thing to learn to be quiet: "He that believeth shall not make haste." Do not take God's work into your own hands; when a thing is not clear, and you are really in doubt, and when you do not know what it is right to do, do not be in a hurry, do not make things worse by precipitancy; "it is good for a man patiently to wait." You may like to be at work, you feel as if you had gifts that should not be idle; it may be necessary, you know, that you should just be quiet for a time, and God will show you by and by what you ought to do.

> God doth not need
> Either man's work, or his own gifts. Who best
> Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
> Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
> They also serve who only stand and wait.

¶ You get up in the morning, and before you do anything else, you go and place yourself on your knees, and you "wait" a few minutes for the Father's blessing. You seek an audience of the King of kings. You pay duty to God. You recognise your relationship to God—your dependence upon God—your trust in God. That is "waiting upon the Lord." Then, all the day, feeling your weakness, and ignorance, and danger, you are constantly in little secret acts of communion—by silent prayer and silent praise. That is carrying on the "waiting upon the Lord." Then, you carry about with you—whatever you are doing—whomever else you are serving—the thought, "I am doing this for Christ. I am

serving the Lord Christ. I am waiting upon my own dear Master." And you like always to have some special work in hand which is immediately done for Christ. It is your privilege, your joy, to do something for anybody's comfort—something for anybody's soul—all for Jesus. That is "waiting upon the Lord." You come up to this place not only and not so much for anything you are to get here; but to do homage; to attend court; to show your affectionate reverence; to unite with all God's hosts in every world in an act of solemn worship. That is "waiting upon the Lord." Or, you draw nearer still, into the sanctuary of the Holy Communion. You wait on Christ for some brighter manifestations of His presence. You take, at His hands, the soul's bread and the soul's wine; and you unite yourself to Him in His own appointed way. That is service—free, holy, happy service. As true service, as acceptable to God, as the service of an angel—as the service of that blessed company in heaven, where His servants are serving Him indeed.

II.

Shall renew their Strength.

The word "renew" means here to put a new thing in place of an old thing. So in Isa. ix. 10: "Sycomores have been cut down, but cedars will we put in their place." Hence it is, literally, to put a new fresh strength in place of the old. But how is this to be brought about? In what way are those that wait for Jehovah to renew their strength? To my mind there is only one possible answer to this question. Do we not read in the words almost immediately preceding: "He (Jehovah) giveth to the weary force, and unto the powerless maketh strength to abound" (Cheyne)? In themselves those that wait for Jehovah are not any better or stronger, they have no greater power of exertion or of endurance, than the youths who faint and are weary, and the young men who stumble. But this is the supreme advantage which they have. They renounce, abandon, their own strength, or rather their supposed strength, that strength which has been used up, that strength which has been found utterly inadequate, that strength they renounce and abandon, and they take in its place the strength of Jehovah Himself. What they cannot do for themselves, Jehovah does for them. The strength of Jehovah, fresh, inexhaustible, almighty,

Divine, takes the place of, is the substitute for, their own strength, so weak, so limited, so utterly inadequate. In other words, we have here one phase of the Christian doctrine of *substitution*, not substitution as applied to the matter of atonement, the sacrifice offered for sin, but as applied to the spiritual experience of the believer in meeting the various temptations, sorrows, losses, afflictions, trials, and adversities of life, in performing the various duties of life and in accomplishing its work for the glory of his Lord, and the advancement of His Kingdom.

The Word of God is filled with promises, which glitter and shine on every page of this sacred Book—and yet, as every effect has a cause, so every promise has its condition; and as in Nature the effect cannot be disjoined from the cause, no more can the blessing be disjoined from the condition. They are inseparably united. "And the word of the Lord came to Joshua, saying, Go over Jordan and take the land. There shall no man be able to stand against thee all the days of thy life, for as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee. I will never fail thee nor forsake thee. Only be thou very courageous." This law comes into our text—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." The condition of waiting upon the Lord must be fulfilled before we can expect the renewal of our strength. And be it remembered that here, as in all other cases, material and spiritual, the condition is not some arbitrary demand on the part of God. It is not His exorbitant price for the blessing in question. The condition is the means whereby the blessing is to be obtained. Thus the essential condition for getting a strong, muscular arm is that it shall be used to do hard and constant service. But if this condition be fulfilled, it will also prove to be the means whereby the strength is produced.

1. The man who waits upon the Lord gets an ever wider experience of God's grace and faithfulness as life advances. All experienced Christians grow brighter, stronger, and calmer in their assurance of God's love. Every one who has known anything of grace in himself can confirm this.

¶ Let me call one witness—a ripe Bible scholar—but one who began life as a poor boy in a workhouse. He had lost his hearing absolutely, by an accident, while little more than a child. By

well-meaning friends he was consigned to a poorhouse. But he ended, after many labours, a loved and honoured interpreter of Holy Scripture. This is what Dr. John Kitto writes on a like text in this same prophet Isaiah: "Thirty years ago, before the Lord caused me to wander from my father's house and from my native place, I put my mark upon this text: 'I am the Lord; they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.' Of the many books I now possess," he goes on, "the Bible that bears this mark was the only one that belonged to me at that time. It *now* lies before me, and I find that although the hair which was then as dark as night has meanwhile become 'a sable silvered,' the ink which marked this text has grown into intensity of blackness, corresponding with the growing intensity of conviction. 'They shall not be ashamed that wait for Him.' I believed it then, I know it now; and I can write with all my heart over against that symbol, *Probatum est*—'It is proved.' Looking back through the long period which has passed since I set my mark to these words—a portion of human life which forms the best and brightest, as well as the most trying and conflicting, in all man's experience—it is a joy to be able to say it. Under many perilous circumstances, in many trying scenes, amid faintings within and fears without, under sorrows that rend the heart and troubles that crush it down, 'I have waited for Thee, O Lord, and I stand this day as one not ashamed.'"[1]

2. It is only by waiting on the Lord that His ways can be discovered and understood. Our hasty glances and hurried inferences are sure to err. You notice Israel in this chapter—captive, broken-hearted, and complaining—says, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." How often have we fallen into such pettish and childish thoughts of our heavenly Father! We forget how great, how calm, how unwearied and unwearying, He is! "The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not. There is no searching of his understanding"; but *waiting* upon Him brings us to know Him, and so renews our strength.

¶ Several years ago a connection was discovered by a man of science between two sets of natural facts which seem far enough apart, viz. the magnetic currents of the earth and the spots on the sun. It was made in this way: A German astronomer, Schwabe, of Dessau, capital of the Duchy of Anhalt, for a very long succession of years observed and kept account of the number of sun-

[1] J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 262.

spots seen every day, so that a periodic rise and fall in the numbers was made out, during regular cycles of eleven years, corresponding with a like cycle of magnetic storms on the earth. Now this law or fact was learned by waiting for it. So many years the observer spent to satisfy himself, and so many more years to convince the world. For forty-two years the sun never rose a single morning, clear of clouds, above the flat horizon of that German plain at Dessau, but the patient telescope of Schwabe confronted him. On an average, about 300 days out of every year the observations were taken, so that over 12,000 times was the sun seen, and above 5000 groups of sun-spots were discovered. "An instance," were the words used in awarding a prize to Schwabe, "of devoted persistence unsurpassed in the annals of astronomy." The energy of one man has discovered what had eluded even the suspicion of astronomers for two hundred years. The scientific observer has faith in the uniformity and consistency of nature. He waits for it. He "believes" that it is, and that it becomes a rewarder of those who diligently seek it.[1]

3. There is even a simpler and more direct explanation of the fact that "waiting upon the Lord *renews our strength.*" The ancient Greeks had a fable of an earth-born giant who could not be overcome by the ordinary process of knocking him down, for the reason that every time he touched his mother-earth he revived. Now invert that process. It describes the secret of the strength of faith. It is heaven-born. All grace is of the Lord. Each act of fresh dependence upon God "renews its strength." Everything that breaks us off from self and means, and drives us up in our helplessness to the Lord, is our gain. For "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (v. 29). "Most gladly therefore," as St. Paul says, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10).

¶ You touch your electric button, and immediately the bell in your kitchen rings. You know that an influence of some kind, which is generated in the cells lying down in your cellar, is carried in a trice round the wires and makes that bell ring; but what that influence is, or how it passes along the wires, neither you nor the wisest electrician in the world can tell. Yet you believe that such influence or power exists, and you act upon your belief. So I am told that waiting upon God produces renewed strength.

[1] G. H. Morgan.

Although I do not know how that strength travels from God to me, though I am unable to define that strength, yet when, after testing the statement, I find it to be correct in practice, I will believe it, and act upon that belief.[1]

¶ "With five shillings," said Teresa the mystic, when her friends laughed at her proposal to build an orphanage—"with five shillings Teresa can do nothing; but with five shillings and God there is nothing Teresa cannot do."[2]

Lord, at Thy feet my prostrate heart is lying,
Worn with the burden, weary of the way;
The world's proud sunshine on the hills is dying,
And morning's promise fades with parting day;
Yet in Thy light another morn is breaking,
Of fairer promise, and with pledge more true,
And in Thy life a dawn of youth is waking
Whose bounding pulses shall this heart renew.

Oh, to go back across the years long vanished,
To have the words unsaid, the deeds undone,
The errors cancelled, the deep shadows banished,
In the glad sense of a new world begun;
To be a little child, whose page of story
Is yet undimmed, unblotted by a stain,
And in the sunrise of primeval glory
To know that life has had its start again!

I may go back across the years long vanished,
I may resume my childhood, Lord, in Thee,
When in the shadow of Thy cross are banished
All other shadows that encompass me:
And o'er the road that now is dark and dreary,
This soul, made buoyant by the strength of rest,
Shall walk untired, shall run and not be weary,
To bear the blessing that has made it blest.[3]

III.

They shall mount . . . they shall run . . . they shall walk.

1. That is a most noticeable sequence. Look at it. "They shall mount up with wings . . . ; they shall run . . . ; they shall walk." Flying, running, walking. At first sight this

[1] G. H. Morgan. [2] J. D. Jones, *Elims of Life*, p. 140.
[3] George Matheson.

looks like an anticlimax, and the promise reads like a descending promise. If we had wished to use these phrases to illustrate the effects of the strength which God supplies, and if we had wished to use them in an ascending scale, so that each should intensify and carry to a higher point the assertion made in the other, we should have inverted the order, and should have read the clauses thus: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall walk, and not faint; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." But the prophet begins with the *flying* and ends with the *walking*. It looks at first sight, I repeat, as if it were a descending and diminishing promise; as if the progress were from greater to less, and from less to least. As Dr. George Adam Smith puts it, "Soaring, running, walking; and is not the next stage, a cynic might ask, standing still?"[1]

Those who turned the passage into metre for our use in praise in the Paraphrases, have changed the order into what might be supposed more natural; *walking* first, then *running*, and last the *eagle's flight*. Yet no doubt the order as it stands has its reason and its force. It may be simply this, that the eagle-flight is the Christian's burst of early joy and praise; the unwearied running the main onward ardour of an active Christian course; the walk without fainting, the last calm steps and firm, that land the saint in glory. But I prefer to find a principle in it, viz., that in accordance with the whole strain of reflection to which the text has led us, the perseverance of grace is more remarkable than even its occasional triumphs; that the daily course it runs, and the persistence with which it goes further and further, the more the Lord has for it to do, is that which most effectually proves its Divine origin and character. Let us only wait upon the Lord, be wholly, constantly, and vitally dependent upon Him, then we shall renew our strength, change and interchange it too. When soaring is needful "we shall mount up on wings as eagles"; when rapid, steady, onward progress is to be made, "we shall run and not be weary"; but always and all through we shall persevere, "we shall walk and not faint."[2]

[1] J. D. Jones, *Elims of Life*, p. 141. [2] J. Laidlaw.

Strength will come for every day's endurance,
Grace all the way, and glory at the end.

¶ Many cyclists find the three-speed interchangeable gear of great service in varieties of road and weather. Along a good surface, and with a favourable wind, by using the high gear one can easily have a short burst at the rate of from fifteen to twenty miles an hour. When things are not so favourable it is easy to change to the middle gear. With the low gear it is possible to climb stiff hills or continue to ride in the teeth of a gale. May we not see in this an illustration of the true Christian who by waiting on the Lord renews or changes his strength?

A sudden emergency arises and with Christian audacity he courageously attempts the task, he mounts up and is victorious. The demand calls for strenuous effort possibly somewhat prolonged; again, through waiting, his strength is changed, and once more he is victorious. Or, greatest triumph of all, his task is the monotonous plodding of daily duty in the face of adverse influence, and with nothing apparently heroic in the work; but he waits on the Lord, his strength is changed, and he walks without fainting.

2. There is no doubt that we have here a kind of historic treatment of the condition of Israel, of the way in which God's people rise triumphantly above their difficulties, and then march onward in the greatness of their strength. What was the first thing they needed? They were in the grasp of the heathen, surrounded by a great wall of captivity. The iron bonds of the strong were around them, the high walls of imprisonment were there. They were like birds in a cage. What do they require first? Why, eagles' wings, of course, to escape from their prison. They must get up out of this imprisoning barrier some way or other, and God must lend them the strong wings of the eagle that they may soar until they surmount the barriers, and find themselves in the free heaven of liberty again. What do they need next? They must begin their national life anew with enthusiasm. They must haste to build up Zion again. Their hands must not tire by night or day until they have completed the building of the temple of the Lord. Every nerve that belongs to them, every muscle, every power must be devoted to the task! They must run for a time, for there is haste and urgency, and much to be done in a short time.

Ah, but what then when all this enthusiasm, this first novelty, has passed away, what must they do then? Then they must begin the march of a long history, on, on, on, as the days go by, with each rising sun setting forward on the great national march again, bearing the heat and the burden of the day without fainting, from year to year, generation to generation, age to age, on and on they must walk in the power of the Lord.

'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew, and said:
"Ill and o'erwork'd, how fare you in this scene?"—
"Bravely!" said he; "for I of late have been
Much cheer'd with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread*."

O human soul! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,

To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam—
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night!
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.[1]

3. This might be illustrated, if one had imagination, by taking the three forms of *genius*, *temperament*, and *character*. There are some men who naturally have, as it were, the imaginative faculty, the poetic faculty, and their tendency is to soar; they cannot help it, it is the impulse of the genius within them —that is the particular form that the gift of God in them takes —aspiration, a rising and soaring. Well, if that man with his genius waits upon God, and that genius becomes sanctified, he will mount up on wings as eagles towards heaven; there will be sanctified genius, imaginative, embodying itself in sacred song; that which will lift other souls to heaven and give them wings. Then there are other people that are distinguished by perpetual activity; they must be doing something, warring, running, fighting, taking hold of something by perpetual activity; and

[1] Matthew Arnold.

if sanctified, they will run in the way of God's commandments; if God energises their heart with Divine strength they will be able to achieve anything. And there are others of a soberer sort who can neither run nor fly, but they can walk; and, like Enoch, they can walk with God. They quietly walk, drawing no observation to themselves; without great genius, and without the faculty for great achievement, but just walking humbly in that quiet vale of life, they walk, and while the man of the wing does not weary, and the man running does not faint, neither do they—they keep on and on in the way of God and in the way everlasting.

¶ Amiel was a professor in a Swiss university. In his younger dayshis friends prophesied great things concerning him; he was a brilliant and talented youth, and naturally looked forward himself to a life of large activity and great usefulness. In the end he proved what the world calls a failure. It was not only his friends who thought so, for he thought so too. He falsified all the predictions of those who loved him. In life he never did anything very bad, and he never seemed to do anything very good. Few students attended his lectures in the Swiss university where he did his life's work, and Amiel could not help feeling that he was indeed a failure, and he was in great bitterness of spirit many a time. He wrote down his thoughts about himself and the experiences of his everyday life—the humdrum, the drudgery, the untoward, and the unwelcome. He kept his journal for his own eye alone, and every night he entered therein his thoughts and feelings, and the totality of the experiences he had gained during the day. It is sad reading; we have it now Amiel is gone. He had not discovered what the whole world has now discovered—that he was really doing his life's work in the very midst and by means of that which seemed to be a sorry failure. By his experience, gained in mediocre service, gained even through his disappointment, gained by the labours of the every day, in the midst of the comments of those who were sorry that he had not developed something better, he was learning, and for generations to come everybody will see that his life-work was done by means of that which he would have regarded as a failure of that life-work.[1]

4. The marginal reading of the text throws yet another light on its meaning. "They that wait upon the Lord shall *change*

[1] R. J. Campbell.

their strength." The truth suggested is the important one that they who are calmly and constantly depending upon God will get renewal of strength according to their time and their need. They may seem even to exchange one form of strength for another. The strength of a young tree is of one kind—in putting forth shoots, leaves, and blossoms. The strength of the same tree, mature, is of another kind in firmness and fruitfulness. The graces which were active and vigorous in a believer at his first conversion to God, such as were carried upon a stream of warm, natural affections, ought to be renewed or exchanged for more wise, practical, patient fruit-bearing in riper years; and may be exchanged again for deeper spirituality, heavenliness of mind, readiness for the cross, and death as life advances. Now, in these renewals or exchanges of strength he shall be not less useful or pleasing to his Lord. Christ foretold to His Apostle Peter that in his last days he would serve his Master in a very different fashion from that of his youth. "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedest whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." When Peter fell at last a martyr, was bound by his foes, and borne away to be crucified—they say with his head downwards, at his own request, that in one thing at least he might be lower than his Lord—was Peter less strong in faith, was he less loving, than when he girded his fisher's coat about him to swim; or flashed out his sword in the garden, or preached the word of his risen Lord amid howling mobs in the streets of Jerusalem? No! He was stronger, more loving, more lovable, for all those years of waiting had "renewed his strength." And so perhaps we have a key to the anticlimax which closes this verse. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

The heart which boldly faces death
Upon the battlefield, and dares
Cannon and bayonet, faints beneath
The needle-point of frets and cares.
The stoutest hearts they do dismay—
The tiny stings of every day.

And even saints of holy fame,
Whose souls by faith have overcome,
Who wore amid the cruel flame
The molten crown of martyrdom,
Bore not without complaint alway
The petty pains of every day.

Ah! more than martyr's aureole,
And more than hero's heart of fire,
We need the humble strength of soul
Which daily toils and ills require.
Sweet Patience, grant us, if you may,
An added grace for every day.

IV.

They shall mount up with wings as eagles.

They who wait upon the Lord shall obtain a marvellous addition to their resources. Their life shall be endowed with mysterious but most real equipment. They shall obtain wings. We do well when picturing the angel presences to endow them with wings. At the best it is a clumsy symbolism, but all symbolisms of eternal things are clumsy and ineffective. And what do we mean by wings? We mean that life has gained new powers, extraordinary capacity; the old self has received heavenly addition, endowing it with nimbleness, buoyancy, strength. We used to sing in our childhood, "I want to be an angel." I am afraid the sentiment was often poor and unworthy, and removed our thoughts rather to a world that is to be than to the reality by which we are surrounded to-day. But it is right to wish to be an angel if by that wish we aspire after angelic powers and seek for angels' wings. It is right to long for their powers of flight, their capacity to soar to the heights. We may have the angels' wings. Wing-power is not only the reward of those who are redeemed out of time and emancipated from death, and who have entered into the larger life of the unseen glory, but it is the prerogative of you and me. "They that wait upon the Lord . . . shall mount up with

wings." Waiting upon the Lord will enable us to share the angels' fellowship, to feed on angels' food, and to acquire the angels' power of wing. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles."

The saints of God are mountaineers, mounting up to higher and purer air than can be found on earth. Their "citizenship is in heaven." Their great delight is to be with the Lord on the mount; they are glad to be able in heart and mind to sit with Jesus Christ in the heavenlies, holding communion with their Father and His Son Jesus Christ, through the ever-present and powerful influence of the Holy Spirit. The eagle mounts up with remarkable rapidity, and is noted for its swiftness of flight. God asks Job, "Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?" (Job xxxix. 27). Solomon speaks, too, of this swiftness of flight. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings, like an eagle that flieth toward heaven" (Prov. xxiii. 5). Saul and Jonathan were "swifter than eagles" (2 Sam. i. 23). So when we have the Spirit of God with us, we are able in an instant to wing our flight away from things of time and sense, and enter through the veil into the very presence of the Most High. We must take no credit or glory to ourselves for this, for as of old with His literal Israel, so now with His spiritual Israel, the Lord "bears us on eagles' wings, and brings us unto Himself" (Ex. xix. 4).

¶ I will tell you about the eagle's nest. The eagle makes a nest of thorns, and over the thorns the eagle puts some very soft things—some wool or some down over the thorns. And there the eagle lays its eggs, and when the eggs are hatched, the little eagles come out into the nest, and there they stay. And when it is time for the little eagles to fly, what do you think the old eagle does? With his great talons he scratches off the soft wool and the down, and then the thorns prick the little birds, and they must fly because the thorns prick them. And so they fly away, and fly away because the thorns prick them. And what do you think the old eagle does then? He is such a kind old bird. He comes and puts his great wings under the wings of the little birds, and helps them to fly; and so the young eaglets can fly very high, because their father, the old eagle, helps them with his great wings to fly away. And then they go up, and up very high; and if you have ever seen a great bird—a great hawk, or a

kite, or an eagle, as I have seen an eagle, it is very beautiful to see how it flies. It goes up very high, and it makes great circles round and round, and goes very fast, and yet you hardly see it move its wings. It seems almost to go without flapping its wings. It is so grand, so large a circle, and it does it so quietly, so quietly, up very high and round and round.[1]

What are the characteristics of life with wings?

1. *Buoyancy.*—We become endowed with power to rise above things! How often we give the counsel one to another, "You should rise above it!" But too often it is idle counsel, because it implies that the friend to whom we give it has the gift of wings; too frequently he is only endowed with feet. If, when we give the counsel, we could give the wings, the things that bind him to the low plains of life might be left behind.

2. *Loftiness.*—We speak of a "lofty character" as opposed to one who is low or mean. There are men with low motives, and they move along the low way. There are men with mean affections which do not comprehend a brother. Now, it is the glorious characteristic of the Christian religion that it claims to give loftiness to the life. There is no feature that the Bible loves more to proclaim than just this feature of "aboveness." It distinguishes the disciples of Christ. See how the ambitions of the Book run: "Seek the things that are above"; "Set your mind on things above." It speaks also of dwelling "with Christ in the heavenly places."

¶ We cry, O for the wings of a dove! God says, "*You have the wings, use them*; but do not seek to fly *away*; fly *up*, and though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold." There is a sense in which we ought to have the wings of a dove; and there is a sense in which we may be said actually to have them, only we do not use them enough. God's message to us is not merely that we *may* soar, but that we *ought* to soar easily above the things that depress us and keep us down; and if we are in fellowship with Christ, and in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost we will.[2]

3. *Comprehensiveness.*—High soaring gives wide seeing. Loftiness gives comprehension. When we live on the low grounds

[1] J. Vaughan, in *Contemporary Pulpit*, 2 Ser., iii. p. 166.
[2] G. H. Knight.

we possess only a narrow outlook. One man offers his opinion on some weighty matter, and he is answered by the charge, "That is a very low ground to take." The low ground always means petty vision. Men who do not soar always have small views of things. We require wings for breadth of view. Now see! The higher you get the greater will be the area that comes within your view. We may judge our height by the measure of our outlook. How much do we see? We have not got very high if we only see ourselves; nay, we are in the mire! "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." It is well when we get so high that our vision comprehends our town, better still when it includes the country, better still when it encircles other countries, best of all when it engirdles the world. It is well when we are interested in home missions; better still when home and foreign work are comprehended in our view.

¶ If we only lived more habitually above the world, we would have larger freedom, larger joy, and larger safety. Have we not noticed how very helpless any bird is on the ground, though on the wing it is both strong and safe? To fight temptations on their own level is not always the most successful way. It is better to rise so far above them that we shall feel as little enticed by them as God's pure angels were enticed by the iniquities of Sodom.[1]

4. *Proportion.*—To see things aright we must get away from them. We never see a thing truly until we see it in its relationships. We must see a moment in relation to a week, a week in relation to a year, a year in relation to eternity. Wing-power gives us the gift of soaring, and we see how things are related one to another. An affliction looked at from the lowlands may be stupendous; looked at from the heights it may appear little or nothing. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." What a breadth of view! And here is another. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to usward." This is a bird's-eye view. It sees life "whole."[2]

[1] G. H. Knight. [2] J. H. Jowett.

V.

They shall run and not be weary.

There are many meanings which this may bear. But the pith of them all seems to be *Capacity for the most strenuous exertion.* They shall run. Wherefore? Because the King's business requireth haste. Would that the King's servants always felt this. We are too ready to imagine that our work is to be literally easy, and our Christian witness-bearing literally light. But if ever the world is to be won to Christ, we shall have to endure hardness for Him. We shall have to ponder deeply the great questions of the social and moral well-being of what are called "the masses," the ignorance and depravity of our large towns, the semi-serfdom of the agricultural population, the great problem of the drunkenness that disgraces our national life and what can be done to remove it, and many kindred subjects that, as yet, we have hardly looked at.

There is power waiting for you for all the great crises of your lives which call for special, though it may be brief, exertion. Such crises will come to each of you, in sorrow, work, difficulty, hard conflicts. Moments will be sprung upon you without warning, in which you will feel that years hang on the issue of an instant. Great tasks will be clashed down before you unexpectedly which will demand the gathering together of all your power. And there is only one way to be ready for such times as these, and that is to live waiting on the Lord, near Christ, with Him in your hearts, and then nothing will come that will be too big for you. However rough the road, and however severe the struggle, and however swift the pace, you will be able to keep it up. Though it may be with panting lungs and a throbbing heart, and dim eyes and quivering muscles, yet if you wait on the Lord you will run and not be weary. You will be masters of the crises.

Holiness does not consist exclusively in heavenly contemplation and prayer. The breathing of the pure air of heaven is essential for the saints, that they may be able to "*run*" *in the way of God's commandments, and not grow weary in the race.* There must be something very deficient in that holiness which is

characterised by slothfulness and lack of effort. We are told to "follow holiness" (Heb. xii. 14). The word "to follow" signifies pursuing an enemy, or pursuing in the chase. Let us learn to be as intent upon holiness as the soldier is intent upon pursuing the enemy. Let us be as eager to pursue holiness as the hound is to follow the fox, or the hare, or the stag.

Have you ever noticed how the servants of God in the Bible—from Abraham and David to Philip in the Acts—whenever they were told to do anything, always ran. It is the only way to do anything well. Run. A thousand irksome duties become easy and pleasant if we do them runningly—that is, with a ready mind, an affectionate zeal, and a happy alacrity.

¶ In *Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires*, by the Rev. E. R. Young, we are told that amongst the brigades of Indians who annually left Norway House for the Mackenzie River and Athabasca districts with supplies, and to bring back furs, the Christian brigade was always the first to return. The men themselves attributed it to their observance of the Sabbath as a day of waiting upon God. According to their account of one trip the brigades kept together until the first Saturday. Then those from the Christian mission chose a place for their Sunday camp, and spent that day in rest and worship. Next day they started early, refreshed by their rest, and on Thursday had passed the others and camped as the head brigade. Next Sunday they rested again, and the others passed them and camped a few miles farther on. "We were up very early on Monday morning, and came up to the others while they were at breakfast. With a cheer we rowed by, and they did not catch up to us again. . . . We were three days down on our way home when we met the other brigades going up." They rested every Sunday during the trip of two months, yet were home a week before those who pushed on every day. These Indians were no larger or stronger than others, but in waiting upon God they renewed their physical as well as their spiritual strength.

VI.

They shall walk and not faint.

Is this the same as saying that we shall have the power of *steady perseverance, of patient endurance under protracted trial*? Did the prophet put this last in his brief summary because patience is one of those Christian graces that has its perfect

work the latest—because the bearing of the Lord's burden is often a much more difficult thing than the doing of the Lord's work? And was it because He would encourage us by the assurance that even that power, difficult of attainment as it is, shall yet be ours through prayer? Thank God for the assurance, for we greatly need it! "They shall break down under the trial," suggests the devil. "No," says the prophet, "they shall bear up bravely." That is, if in the great warfare it is not theirs to be conspicuous in the battlefield, they shall receive power to be loyal in the barracks. If on the seas of Christly activity it is not theirs to lead the squadrons of exploration, they shall at least be vigilant in the roadstead, and alert about the shore.

The flight into the heavenlies, and the vigorous putting forth of effort, will fit us for the ordinary walks of life. If all our religious exercises do not make us better husbands to our wives, better wives to our husbands, better parents to our children, better children to our parents, better masters and mistresses to our servants, and better servants to our masters, what are they all worth? We are then but "clouds without water," and trees "whose fruit withereth.". Without doubt the highest attainment is put last—it is the climax of holiness: "They shall *walk*, and not faint." If there is not holiness in little things, what can we expect in great things but mere paint and veneer, and what is artificial? But there is nothing so likely to produce true saintship in the home and the quiet walks of daily life as prayer and much waiting on God, as well as much valiant fighting and vigorous running, and deliberate setting aside every weight.

Let me give you four rules for this "walk." (1) *Start from Christ.* Believe, and do not doubt your forgiveness,—that you have an interest in Christ. The only setting-out point must be the foot of the cross. (2) *Walk with Christ.* Feel Him at your side. Realise your union then. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" (3) *Walk leaning on Christ.* That is the most true and beautiful picture of the Christian in the whole Bible,—"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Up, up, out of a world which has become a barren wilderness,—for the superior joys you now

taste; "leaning," leaning on one she dearly loves. And then (4) *walk to Christ.* I know it is a long, rugged, steep road to go; but you are going home; and you are going to Jesus! Therefore go; "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame; and is now set down" at the very place where you are going.[1]

¶ The United States in 1861 took up the sword in the cause of the negro. A wave of passionate enthusiasm for the cause of the downtrodden and the oppressed swept over the land, and from every town and village in the Northern States there went young men to fight the negro's battle, singing as they went—

"John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave,
But his soul goes marching on."

I admire the United States in those days of splendid enthusiasm and hope at the beginning of the war, when she mounted up with wings as eagles, and ran, and was not weary. But I frankly confess I admire that great nation still more in the later stages of the conflict; when the terrible realities of war came home to her; when it became apparent that the deliverance of the negro was likely to be a long, costly, and bloody business; when, in spite of defeat after defeat, she stuck doggedly to her task, sending regiment after regiment and army after army into the field, bating not a jot or tittle of her resolve; not soaring or running now, perhaps, but still "walking, and not faint."[2]

¶ Did you ever hear of a great mathematician who lived a long while ago? He was one of the greatest mathematicians, and knew about the stars. He was an astronomer, and was a very learned man. And he has written his life, and he tells what happened to him when he was a boy. He says when a boy he got tired of mathematics, and was going to give it all up. He said, "I shall give it up, I shall never be a clever man." Well, very strangely, as he was thinking that, he saw a piece of paper on the cover of his book, and somehow or other, he could never tell why, he thought he should like to have it, and he got some water and damped it, and then got this piece of paper off, and on it was written, "Go on, sir; go on, sir." And he said afterwards, "That was my master; I had no other master; that bit of paper was my master. I went on—I went on; I would not give it up, and all through my life that has been my master, and to it I owe everything."[3]

[1] J. Vaughan. [2] J. D. Jones. [3] J. Vaughan.

The Bruised Reed and the Smoking Flax.

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The Bruised Reed and the Smoking Flax.

He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench.—xlii. 2, 3.

With this chapter we reach a distinct stage in the prophecy of this book. The preceding chapters have been occupied with the declaration of the great, basal truth, that Jehovah is the One Sovereign God. This has been declared to two classes of hearers in succession—to God's own people, Israel, in chap. xl., and to the heathen in chap. xli. Having established His sovereignty, God now publishes His will, again addressing these two classes according to the purpose which He has for each. He has vindicated Himself to Israel, the Almighty and Righteous God, who will give His people freedom and strength; He will now define to them the mission for which that strength and freedom are required. He has proved to the Gentiles that He is the one true God: He will declare to them now what truth He has for them to learn. In short, to use modern terms, the apologetic of chaps. xl.-xli. is succeeded by the missionary programme of chap. xlii.

And here the missionary hope reaches its highest expression in the picture of a Servant of Jehovah, who, with gentle persistence and unostentatious zeal, shall carry to the nations the precious gifts of revelation which have been coming to clearness and power through all the toil and travail of the past. It would be well for the teacher of to-day to linger lovingly over this picture of a divinely elected and supremely gifted minister. From it he may learn to combine reverence for past revelations with quickness to hear the present voice of God, stern faithfulness to God and truth, with keen know-

ledge of life and kindly sympathy for men. But the fact that concerns us most is that, whether this is a personification of Israel or the picture of the individual ideal Servant, we have the true religion beating against the narrow local barriers and leaping forward to a large universal life. Judaism could never completely fulfil such a picture; it can be realised only by the pure spiritual religion of Jesus. In its earliest days Christianity went forth to free religion and man from narrow prejudices and petty limitations; great things have been done along this line, but an immense task still lies before the Church, demanding both intelligence and love.

The particular topic of our text is the Servant's gentle unobtrusive way of carrying out His work. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." Of this gentle but effective way of working two examples are given. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." Two pictures are presented by the metaphors that are made use of. The first picture is an exterior. The region represented is a flat and marshy one; the locality is lonely and desolate. Growing amid shallow but cold and swirling waters, we see tall reeds and rushes. The sky is grey and heavy, with clouds fleeting before the blast; the reeds bend under the storm: you can almost feel the nipping wind as you look at the picture. And the reeds are swayed hither and thither, being bruised and battered as they jostle one against the other. Look closely at those reeds, and you will scarcely find one that is not scarred and mangled. They are *bruised* reeds. The other picture is an interior. "The smoking flax shall he not quench." The picture is that of an Eastern room. We dimly see the low divans or lounges around the walls, and if the light were brighter we might discern the features of the persons reclining there. There is a low table in the centre of the room, and upon it stands a lamp. In shape this lamp is something like a modern teapot; the receptacle being for the oil, and the wick protruding from what would be the spout. That wick should be burning brightly; instead of that, however, there is only a dull red glow, and there is more smoke than light. It is a "smoking lamp." From these two pictures we may learn something as to Christ and Christian character.

I.

The Saviour's unobtrusive Way of Working.

1. *The Restraint of God.*—This Saviour is God's Servant. His method of working is therefore God's method. And so the first thing to notice is the marvellous restraint of God in all His dealings with men. Does it not strike you, says Bishop Wilkinson,[1] that there is something awful about it, this thought of the power of God restrained, kept back? There are souls that will at last reject all God's love, will go on resisting till they die; yet Christ keeps back His power! He does not manifest His power as a King—"He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets." He allows His message to be despised and rejected! He comes to us, with power kept back! "Where is the promise of His coming?" men say. They think that God is weak, and God seems to say, "I am content that you should think Me weak, rather than that I should break the 'bruised reed,' or quench the 'smoking fire'!" I see a man whose heart God has stirred rejecting these better impulses; yet God is patient, calm. When I read in my Bible that God is Almighty, and yet I see that His power is not manifested in this dispensation; that He is patient, long-suffering to usward, lest the "smoking flax" should be quenched, it gives me an awful idea of the majesty of God. I see men and women keeping Christ standing at the door. Their child dies; the blinds are drawn down, and still the Saviour stands outside the long-closed door! And then some dear friend is taken, some one who was as a brother, and again the same Voice speaks; again I see the Saviour standing there, and still the door is closed! And when we think who it is — God, who could destroy that man with a word, yet "despised and rejected"—going forth, as it were, so humbly, with that long funeral procession, to whisper if only a word to one of the mourners; then, in awe, we say, "O God, have mercy on that man. He is fighting against God. He is presuming on God's self-restrained power!"

[1] *The Invisible Glory*, p. 50.

2. *The quiet ways of Christ.*—Pretenders vaunt insolently of their claims, and are elated by a momentary triumph. He is "meek and lowly in spirit." His heart beats with even pulse, whether the palm branches are strewed in His path or the thorns are twisted for His crown. False Christs are turbulent and haughty, "boasting themselves to be somebody." He withdrew from the royalty which the people would fain have forced upon Him, and charged the healed demoniacs that they should not make Him known. Political demagogues raise tumults for selfish ends. He had no war with Cæsar, forbade the sword to His disciples, steadily discountenanced the risings of their patriot pride, and impressed upon them that in the diviner monarchy, which was above trappings and legions, He reigned as King for ever. And so quietly has Christianity spread its influences upon men. Not the whirlwind, the pestilence, but the dew, the seed, the leaven — things which work quietly, mighty forces, resistless from the might of their silence—these are its emblems. The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Physical convulsions may precede it. The whirlwind of passion, and the earthquake which shaketh the nations, and the fire, consuming to all olden wrong, and all encumbering circumstance, may be the couriers of the Gospel, but it speaks in the "still small voice"—that majestic whisper which always makes a silence for itself—however loud and rude the clamour. It does not "strive nor cry," but without strife or crying makes its way into the conscience of the world.

¶ What a strange mode of bringing forth judgment! What a strange mode especially of bringing forth judgment "to the Gentiles." A Gentile's evidence for a man's possession of the Divine Spirit was just the contrary; it was his power to cry, to lift up his voice, to let his anger be heard in the street, to break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax; it was for gifts such as these that the Roman raised his heroes to the skies. But here is a new and unheard-of heroism. Here is a heroism whose strength consists in the power to suffer and not cry. Here is a Spirit which claims to be Divine on the ground not of breaking but of being broken, not of bruising but of being bruised. The Gentiles are judged by a new standard of strength—the standard of patience. They are no longer measured by what they can do, but by what they can bear. They are no longer valued by the burdens they can impose, but by the burdens they can sustain.

They are no longer asked how many towers they have pulled down, how many victims they have slain, how many homes they have made desolate. They are asked how many defeats they have borne undismayed, how many crosses they have received unmurmuring, how many obloquies they have endured unavenged. The valley has become a mountain, and the mountain a valley. The gentleness which was a mark of contempt has made its possessor great, and the testimonial for admission into the new army is this: "He shall not strive nor cry."[1]

II.

His Tenderness with the Broken Reed.

"He shall not break the bruised reed." Here is the picture —a slender bulrush, growing by the margin of some tarn or pond; its sides crushed and dented in by some outward power, a gust of wind, a sudden blow, the foot of a passing animal. The head is hanging by a thread, but is not yet snapped or broken off from the stem.

And the first thing that emerges from the metaphor is not only the solemn thought of the bruises by sin that all men bear, but the other blessed one, that no man is so injured that restoration is impossible, no depravity so total but that it may be healed, no one so far off but that he may be brought nigh. On no man has sin fastened its venomous claws so deeply but that these may be wrenched away. And so the text comes with its great triumphant hopefulness, and gathers into one mass as capable of restoration the most abject, the most worthless, the most ignorant, the most sensuous, the most godless, the most Christ-hating of the race. Jesus looks on all the tremendous bulk of a world's sins with the confidence that He can move that mountain and cast it into the depths of the sea.

Nature throws away her broken vessels with no compunction or pity whatever. Everywhere the weak and sickly among the lower animals are ruthlessly killed off, and only those remain which are able to do for themselves. The fit survive—the feeble perish. It is hardly necessary to lead any proof of this.

[1] G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 66.

The stricken deer turns aside to die, while the fat herd sweeps on indifferent to its fate. The pack of lean wolves know of no surgery for a fainting comrade, except to fall on him and rend him in pieces. The frail bird that cannot fly with the rest of the brood is tumbled from the nest and left to its fate. Nature has, indeed, a great healing power for the strong and healthy in case of accident, so that wounds and broken bones soon come together again. But among wild animals sickness, disease, feebleness, and age meet with no compassion. In their warfare it is still *Vae victis*, for they cannot cumber themselves with the wounded. The halt and the blind get no chance at all. The weak and sickly are left to their fate, and the sooner it comes the better, for their kindred turn from them and their friends will not know them. Unfit for the struggle of existence which is their supreme business, they perish without ruth or remorse. Thus everywhere on sea and land, and in the lightsome air, among all creatures that swim, or fly, or creep, or run, we find this law working, and doubtless working for the general good of the whole, yielding a benevolent harvest of health and comfort to the unthinking creatures of God.

But now, when we pass from them into the province of man, we meet at once with a law which breaks in upon this, and controls it. The struggle for existence goes on there too, but it is no longer supreme and all in all. Everywhere it is modified by ideas that are confessedly of greater moment and higher authority. Sometimes it is set aside altogether, for we are not always bound to exist if we can, but we are always bound to do right. Thus the moral rises above the natural, and even flatly contradicts it. The struggle for existence is subordinated to the struggle for a higher perfection. Instead of the survival of the fittest, we have a law requiring the strong to help the weak, the healthy to improve their health for the sake of the diseased; and even those who are hopelessly stricken, and for ever invalided from the battle of life, are cast on us as a peculiar care, to neglect which were to outrage the noblest instincts of humanity. The natural law, everywhere else in full swing, that the weak and sickly, the halt and the blind, must be left to their fate, or even hurried out of the way, not only does not hold among us, but the very reverse of it holds.

¶ The poor cripple whom natural law would have cast away, has grown up to bless the world with wise and noble counsel; and blind men, all unfit for the mere struggle of animal life, have yet done brave and good service in the high warfare of humanity; even the utterly broken, the helplessly disabled, who can "only stand and wait," have yet, by their meek patience under affliction, shown us an example which made our hearts gentler, humbler, better, and was well worth all the care we bestowed on them.

1. Bruised reeds! How true an emblem of our experience and condition the picture is! Plunge in among these reeds, and you will not find one free from scars and bruises. Some of the marks will need searching for, but they are there. And if you could read the secret history of every individual in a crowd of people, you would find that not one had escaped being battered by storm and tempest; and, indeed, sometimes almost uprooted by the cold and swirling waters of sorrow. Men everywhere are truly bruised reeds. It may save us from harsh and uncharitable judgments if we never forget it.

¶ Read your newspaper, that mirror of the world's daily life, and weep over fallen human nature as you do so. What horrible revelations meet you! In this country the darkest deeds man's mind can conceive and his fingers can execute are enacted day by day. Under the power of the drink fiend a woman will forget her sucking child, and will have no compassion on the son of her womb. Under the influence of the devil of lust men will ruthlessly trample the fairest flowers under their feet. Under the dominance of the devil of greed some will sell their own brothers for a few paltry coins. Read your scientific books, and you will find vivisection preached so far as animals are concerned, and "natural selection" and the "survival of the fittest" so far as the race is concerned. "Let the weak perish, let the afflicted be cut off"—says a pitiless science—thus following the ancient Spartans, who killed off their sickly and deformed offspring, and Plato, who favoured infanticide. These people would deliberately and in cold blood break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax. Into such a world as this Christ comes, comes to teach us that God is love, that the strongest being in the universe is the gentlest, that all life is precious, that even maimed humanity is worth saving, that the man most in the mud is to be lifted out, so that his powers may unfold themselves in winsome and undecaying blossoms by the river of life. "The bruised reed shall he not break."[1]

[1] J. Pearce, *Life on the Heights*, p. 139.

¶ He uses and loves and transfigures broken reeds. They become pens, to write the marvels of His truth and the riches of His grace. They become instruments of sweet music, to ring forth His praises in winning melody. They become columns which support and adorn His temple. They become swords and spears to rout His enemies; so that, as a poet sings, "the bruised reed is amply tough to pierce the shield of error through." [1]

2. But the bruising may be due to personal sin. There are many who realise that their lives are knocked out of their proper shape. They have dealt out to themselves many a rude blow, have battered their hearts, and there they are, sick at heart, ready to die. "Ah, poor fellow, he is his own enemy," is our comment on some of our fellows who are spoiling their lives. Alas! how many of us are our own enemies! How many of us have robbed, degraded, and damaged ourselves. God meant us to be temples, but we have desecrated the hallowed shrine. God meant us to be kings, but we have given our crowns away. God meant us to be priests, but we have made ourselves vile. God meant us to be His children, but we have wandered away and become Satan's serfs.

¶ As Prebendary Carlile was going into the Church Army Headquarters he saw six strong, rough-looking men gazing at the building. He said, "What department are you going into?" It was evident that the men did not like to say. So he said, "Where do you come from?" They hesitated still more. Then one of them said, "From Pentonville." Six bruised reeds! The State, with a machinery magnificently worked by devoted people, cannot help these reeds. Many of them start by breaking into a baker's shop for a loaf of bread. The unemployed are not all frauds. Listen to what the head of the Church Army tells us: "I knelt beside a man in my own Church, at the communion-rail, a few Sundays ago. The man was a bruised reed. We prayed together as two poor sinners, and I turned to him after hearing his very fluent cries and said, "Don't go on like this. You only want to get a night's lodging out of me, don't you?" He said, "I don't want a night's lodging. I wouldn't take it if you offered it me." I said, "Why do you come to-night and join with me at the altar?" He said, "Last week my friend and I walked for three nights, and we tried for three days to get some one to give us some work. And it affected my friend so badly that he hung himself.

[1] A. Smellie, *In the Hour of Silence*, p. 92.

I thought perhaps I should have to hang myself next week, so I have come here to try to get right with God before I do it." [1]

Whoso hath anguish is not dead in sin,
Whoso hath pangs of utterless desire.
Like as in smouldering flax which harbours fire,—
Red heat of conflagration may begin,
Melt that hard heart, burn out the dross within,
Permeate with glory the new man entire,
Crown him with fire, mould for his hands a lyre
Of fiery strings to sound with those who win.
Anguish is anguish, yet potential bliss,
Pangs of desire are birth-throes of delight;
Those citizens felt such who walk in white,
And meet, but no more sunder, with a kiss;
Who fathom still-unfathomed mysteries,
And love, adore, rejoice, with all their might.[2]

III.

His Gentleness with the dimly burning Lamp.

1. If we take the bruised reed as representing the last ravages of suffering and sin, we may take the smoking lamp as representing the first faint signs of goodness. Then this second metaphor will have as wide a sweep as the former. There is something in all men, something in their nature which corresponds to this dim flame that needs to be fostered in order to blaze brightly abroad. There is no man out of hell, says Maclaren, but has in him something that only needs to be brought to sovereign power in his life in order to make him a light in the world. You have consciences at the least; you have convictions, you know you have, which, if you followed them out, would make Christians of you straight away. You have aspirations after good, desires, some of you, after purity and nobleness of living, which only need to be raised to the height and the dominance in your lives which they ought to possess, in order to revolutionise your whole course. There is a spark in every man which, fanned and cared for, will change him from darkness into light.

[1] *The Church Pulpit Year Book*, 1910, p. 3.
[2] Christina G. Rossetti.

2. But the metaphor may be applied in a narrower way. It may be applied to those who have something of the Divine life in them, although it may be but a little spark. Our best example is the first disciples of our Lord and the way in which He dealt with them. Wherever there were the first faint stirrings of faith or love, He cherished and sheltered them with tender care. In His teaching He led them on little by little, line upon line, drawing them first to familiar converse with Himself; not upbraiding their slowness; not severely rebuking their faults. When James and John would have brought fire from heaven, He said only, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." To Philip, when he blindly asked to see the Father, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" And when He detected their ambitious contests which should be the greatest, "being in the house He asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" Even at the last supper He said, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"; and to St. Thomas, after his vehement unbelief, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing." And to St. Peter, in chastisement for his three open denials, He said thrice, as in a doubting, melancholy tenderness, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?"

3. And it is, further, a picture of the timid, unsatisfactory Christian—unsatisfactory to God, unsatisfactory to man. What is the use of a lamp that does not give light, a knife that will not cut, a pen that splutters when you attempt to write with it? How many professing Christians there are who are not burning and shining lights, but smoking lamps! and what a trouble they are both in the Church and out of it! In a village church lighted with lamps, if one among them smokes, it attracts a great deal of attention and criticism; the others are scarcely noticed. Just so is it with Christians who are symbolised by a smoking lamp. Everybody observes them, and everybody criticises them. They bring dishonour upon themselves and upon their Church.

But though the lamp be a smoking one, He will not quench it. How patient is the Saviour in His dealings with men!

He'll never quench the smoking flax,
But raise it to a flame.

The harsh, pharisaical spirit says of the unsatisfactory tree, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" But Jesus says, "Let it stand this year also." Here is guidance for the Church. What Christ would not do, the Church must not do. "If a man be overtaken in a fault," what is to be done with him? Is he to be at once excommunicated? "Not so," says the apostle. "Ye which are spiritual restore such an one." We must not quench the smoking lamp. "Comfort the feeble-minded," cries Paul in another place: stretch out a helping hand to him; speak a word of encouragement. Forgive such an one even unto seventy times seven. As long as the ship floats, it must never be abandoned; as long as there is a vestige of life in the plant, it must not be uprooted. We dare not extinguish the smoking lamp.

In Christ there was no scorn, no contempt, no insolence, no taunting. One poet speaks of—

Those eyes,
Which, though they turn away sometimes,
They never can despise.

And another has written—

For He's not a man that He should judge by the seeing of His eyes,
He's not the son of man that He should anyone despise;
He's God Himself, and far too kind for that, and far too wise.

He did not despise our world. This earth of ours is the Valley of the Humiliation of the Son of God. He did not despise our nature, for He took it on Himself, and has carried it to the Eternal Throne. He did not despise the meanest of His creatures. Aristotle's "magnanimous man" used irony with the common herd. Christ cared for the individual. He never saw men as in a herd. In His days at Nazareth He bathed in the fountain of youth, and was wise in the lore hid from a world grown old. Did a golden dawn entrance sea and shore for Him

in that small and homely world—a world of few ideas and little knowledge? Doubtless he did not miss the morning glory. But he was never deceived, and in every step of His pilgrimage till He ascended the high and hard bed where His work was accomplished, He was still the same, full of grace and truth. To Him the single life was of infinite pathos and importance. The mystery and immensity of the universe did not perplex Him. He had come from Sion. Nor did He despair of any human soul. To despair of a soul, however sunken, is to scorn that soul, but the seat of the scorner was not for Him. He drew near to the fallen, made Himself familiar with their misery, understood all their wild, weary wish for the mercy of the grave, saw how they were ground down without help or horizon, and declared to them a gospel of boundless hope. He suffered them to lay their abased heads at His feet that He might lift them up for ever. This was more than justice. True, He was dyed to the depths in justice, but He was full of pity, full of reverence, full of love. This was the attitude of the Redeemer towards our lost humanity, and this was the attitude which befitted the world's "Expectancy and Rose." He came that the lost and erring might return and know the great warmth of the Divine welcome.[1]

¶ Christ loves and employs and fans into bright and glowing flame dimly burning wicks. They are changed into lamps that shine for the guidance of wandering feet, into beacon fires that warn the voyagers from sandbank and iron coast, into torches which hand on His message to the generation following, into lighthouse rays and beams which conduct storm-tossed sailors to their desired haven.[2]

I know not what the future hath
  Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
  His mercy underlies.

And if my heart and flesh are weak
  To bear an untried pain,
The bruised reed He will not break,
  But strengthen and sustain.

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Garden of Nuts*, p. 112.
[2] A. Smellie, *In the Hour of Silence*, p. 92.

No offering of my own I have,
Nor works my faith to prove;
I can but give the gifts He gave,
And plead His love for love.

And so beside the Silent Sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.[1]

4. Should not Christ's method be the method of all who are Christ's? "Send them away," we say; "Give ye them to eat," He answers. "Wilt thou that we call down fire to consume them?" we ask; He answers, "Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of."

¶ A mere plodding boy was above all others encouraged by Arnold. At Waleham he had once got out of patience and spoken sharply to a pupil of this kind, when the pupil looked up in his face and said, "Why do you speak angrily, Sir? Indeed I am doing the best that I can." Years afterwards he used to tell the story to his children, and said, "I never felt so much ashamed in my life—that look and that speech I have never forgotten."[2]

Judge not; the workings of his brain
And of his heart thou canst not see;
What looks to thy dim eyes a stain,
In God's pure light may only be
A scar, brought from some well-won field,
Where thou would'st only faint and yield.

The look, the air, that frets thy sight,
May be a token that below
The soul has closed in deadly fight,
With some infernal fiery foe
Whose glance would scorch thy smiling grace,
And cast thee shuddering on thy face!

[1] J. G. Whittier, "The Eternal Goodness."
[2] Stanley, *Arnold of Rugby*.

The fall thou darest to despise—
  May be the Angel's slackened hand
Has suffered it, that he may rise
  And take a firmer surer stand;
Or, trusting less, to earthly things,
  May henceforth learn to use his wings.

And judge none lost; but wait, and see,
  With hopeful pity, not disdain;
The depth of the abyss may be
  The measure of the height of pain
And love and glory that may raise
  The soul to God in after days![1]

[1] A. Proctor.

A Man of Sorrows.

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A Man of Sorrows.

He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.—liii. 3.

There is not a verse of this chapter of Isaiah at which one might not very well begin, as S. Philip the Evangelist once did to the eunuch, and preach the whole doctrine of Christ crucified. As it was in the counsels of Almighty God, that His Blessed Son should endure for our behalf all the various afflictions which we have deserved, so this famous prophecy touches, one after another, the several sorrows which He endured. It speaks of His intense bodily pain. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." It speaks again of the grievous oppression, the wrong, injustice, undeserved ill-usage, which He had to sustain. "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He openeth not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." And here, in the beginning of the prophecy, mention is particularly made of that which was the root of all the rest, and which many persons would feel as the bitterest of all—His being despised and scorned. "He shall grow up before" God "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not."

What this verse and this chapter prophetically anticipate the Gospel record of His life shows to have been historically fulfilled. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

No other impression admits of being left upon us by the perusal of the New Testament story. It is tragedy pure and solid; wrought out, to be sure, with certain touches of light and beauty, but touches added in such a way as to bring out in only stronger relief the tragic features of earnestness and pathos.

The verse probably contains but one topic—the contempt, or rather aversion, with which men regarded the Servant of the Lord. But the English translation contains the classical phrase "a man of sorrows." And from that, it has generally been held, that its chief topic is the sorrows of the Redeemer. We have, therefore, (1) Christ despised and rejected, and (2) Christ a man of sorrows. The two ideas are not far apart. Keble even says, He was to be a man of sorrows, and *because* of His sorrows, He was to be despised. Such is the pride and bitterness of our sinful nature, ever since the fall of our first parents; which began with the lust of the eyes, Eve indulging herself with the *sight* of the forbidden fruit; and which has gone on ever since, men refusing in general so much as to look at the afflicted, "hiding, as it were, their faces" from them, because such sights interrupt their enjoyment and satisfaction.

I.

Christ Despised and Rejected.

i. *Why He was despised.*

The root of it all is *Unbelief.* This is fully discussed and explained by St. Paul in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which should be read in this connection. His reference to the unbelief of the Jews he ends with the statement: "God hath concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all." To this unbelief the prophet refers in the first verse thus: "Who hath believed our report?" The announcements made by Isaiah and the other prophets, as Jeremiah, Zechariah, and others, had been discredited and disregarded. Piecing the different prophecies of the Old Testament together, the Jews had a clear outline of His whole life from His birth to His ascension, from the earliest prophecy in Gen. iii. 15, in which He is called the "Seed of the woman," to the latest in

Mal. iv. 2, where He is spoken of as the "Sun of Righteousness." They had His biography in their own Scriptures, but they believed them not. And when John the Baptist and Jesus Himself and His apostles came preaching the Kingdom of God, the mass of the people still refused to believe.

¶ Sigismund Goetze, in his picture "Despised and Rejected," has placed upon the canvas a striking illustration of this text. In the centre of the picture is the suffering Christ, bound upon a Roman altar, overshadowed by an angel with the Gethsemane cup, and surrounded by all sorts and conditions of men. Yet He and His sufferings are not in all their thoughts. The political agitator has his crowd, the workman his beer, the artist his cigarette, the broken down his care. Under the very shadow of the great Sufferer, the sporting man is engrossed in his "pink edition," and the scientist in his test-tube. The newsboy is vigorously pushing the sale of his paper containing "the latest winners" and society scandals. The flower-girl offers her wares unnoticed to the society doll, whose frivolous vanity is flattered by the attentions of a fashionable young man. The world-power militarism ignores the suffering Prince of Peace. At the very feet of the Victim are the outcast woman and her babe, while afar off stands the widow with her lonely burden of grief; yet even she does not look to Him for sympathy and help. Churchmen, of whom more might be expected, dispute the text of Scripture, but forget the spirit of the Gospel. Of all that throng, no eye is turned towards the Sufferer, save that of a nurse, well accustomed to scenes of pain and anguish. Her face is expressive of wonder, horror, and sympathy, and suggests Lam. i. 12, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." The great world, engrossed in its own pursuits, its business and its pleasures, its selfishness, and its gain, its frivolity, its grief—all purely questions of time, has no eye for, and no thought of, Christ, who is still the "despised and rejected of men."

1. They were disappointed in His birth and parentage. They expected Him to come as heir of the Royal Family of David, and to be openly known as born and educated at Bethlehem. But He, though of royal descent, was the son of a poor unnoticed virgin and the reputed son of a carpenter, who were not generally known or recognised as descended from David. He grew up and lived a long time in obscurity, probably working at His father's trade. He appeared a poor man who had no home of His own, no attendants but a few poor fishermen

going about as an itinerant teacher and preacher, having no ecclesiastical authority from the chief priests and scribes. Thus, instead of being a "plant of renown," He appeared as a "root out of a dry ground," never likely to come to anything.

2. And as they were disappointed in regard to His birth, so they were in regard to His manner of life. There was no splendid pomp or lordly retinue. But, coming as He did, a poor man, of humble rank and lowly surroundings, notwithstanding the wisdom and grace of His words, the power of His miracles, and the unapproachable beauty of His character, the Jews found in Him no form or comeliness. They were ashamed to own Him, and even the disciples, at the last, all "forsook Him and fled." Thus He was an object of contempt and scorn to the proud Pharisee, the sceptical Sadducee, and haughty, Imperial Roman. He lived a suffering life, constantly subject to evil-speaking, lying, and slander, and He was finally rejected and crucified as an impostor and deceiver.

¶ It seems odd to us, because we read centuries of experience into the story of the past, and confound the Ideal Christ with the Historic Jesus. *We* think of Jesus as going about with a halo of glory about His head, as they represent Him in the pictures: and, of course, that is all a mistaken notion from beginning to end. A halo of glory about His head! Why, He hadn't even a roof to cover it. But still, it *does* seem odd that He was despised. I can understand that a great many people hated Jesus. He was so pure and so true that impure and untrue and hypocritical natures naturally would hate Him. And then those ecclesiastics at Jerusalem, with their idea that religion consisted in formal outward observance: washing the hands, and cleansing platters, and saying formal prayers—of course *they* would hate a teacher who said that all that kind of thing was worthless, and that religion consisted merely in being one with the Father and loving one's fellow-men. Oh, I can understand their hating Him. But despising Him—looking down on Him with contempt—that is the strange thing.[1]

¶ There is a well-known short story by Anatole France where Pontius Pilate is represented in retirement near the end of his life talking over old times with a pleasure-loving friend who had known him in Judæa. During supper the talk falls upon the qualities of the Jewish women, and the friend speaks of Mary of Magdala whom he had known during her unrepentant days in

[1] R. C. Fillingham.

Jerusalem. He recounts the manner of his parting from Mary, who left him to join the band of a young miracle-worker from Galilee. "His name was Jesus; He came from Nazareth, and was crucified at last for some crime or other. Pontius, do you remember the man?" The old procurator frowned and raised a hand to his forehead as one who searches through his memory. Then, after some moments of silence, "Jesus," he muttered, "Jesus of Nazareth? No, I don't remember Him."[1]

ii. *How He is rejected still.*

He is despised and rejected of men still, both Jews and Gentiles, and the words of that hymn are no less plain than sadly true, which says—

> Our Lord is now rejected, and by the world disowned;
> By the many still neglected, but by the few enthroned.
> But soon He'll come in glory, the hour is drawing nigh;
> Oh, the crowning day is coming by and by.

1. We reject Christ when we fear unpopularity.

It is a lesson sorely needed in these days, that unpopularity is not the worst evil, nor popularity the chief aim in life. As we look about us, we see that men's habits and behaviour and ideals are constantly governed by the mere desire to stand high in the good opinion of others. There is the statesman who never dares adopt a policy, however just, which he fancies may put him out of favour with the multitude. There is the author or the artist who works with his eye upon the public purse, and sells his soul for the reputation of an hour. There is the lover of society who is perfectly happy so long as other men think well of him. There is the teacher or the preacher who cuts his message to suit the taste of his hearers; who will never ruffle their complacency or disturb their peace; who, if they are rich, will never speak to them of the dangers of wealth, and, if they are needy, never of the temptations of the poor; who is ready to barter his birthright of truth for the pottage of the world's worship and applause. These are the men who, by their very presence, lower the standard of life for us all.[2]

[1] H. Sturt, *The Idea of a Free Church*, 224.
[2] S. A. Alexander, *The Mind of Christ*, p. 47.

¶ I heard a sermon a short time ago preached in a seaside church which deeply moved me; a sermon I was thankful to have heard, and the like of which I would walk a long way to hear again. As I stood outside the building waiting for a friend the congregation came out, and I heard the usual interchange of verbal nothings. The only reference I did hear to the service was from a well-dressed young man to a girl by his side, and this is what he said, "A long-winded fellow, that; let us go on the parade." The remark did not unduly surprise me. "I wonder," said a man to me lately, "why some people go to a place of worship at all; they appear to be as indifferent to what is said, sung, or prayed, as the dog that barks is indifferent about the dog-star."[1]

2. We reject Christ when we refuse to suffer.

We hide our faces from "the Man of Sorrows" when we wish to make this world a paradise of rest, when we neglect the duty of knowing and acquainting ourselves with the burdens which are borne by men, and begin to plan for this world as if it were a place for happiness and repose. There is no rest here; woe to the man who attempts to make it a place of rest. Oh! there is a false view of things which we get when we try to shut out the thought of suffering. Think of the young man and the young woman who make gaiety their home day after day and night after night, and think of Christ with the sick and maimed around Him; think of one who surrounds himself with the entertainment of this world, and think of one whose day is spent in passing from one sick chamber to another.

The more deeply we enter into the meaning of Christ considered as the Divine Man, the more distinctly revealed it becomes to us that what His life was our life is intended to be. I believe that in our best and truest Christian moments nothing less meets the demands of our own minds and hearts, than that we should become inwardly in our animating spirit, and outwardly in our relations with the world in which we live, reduplications in small of Him whom we call Master. That we try to satisfy ourselves with less than this we should all be prepared to admit. There are instincts and there are impulses and ambitions that shrink from coming under the sovereignty of a commitment so cordial and entire. That accounts for the disproportionate emphasis so customarily laid upon the commercial

[1] A. Shepherd, *Men in the Making*, p. 193.

feature of the atonement. It is pleasant, it fits our languid and criminal tastes to believe that Christ's work was accomplished by His sacrifice upon the cross, in such sense that we are saved by the sheer transaction of crucifixion. It passes as the orthodox view of redemption. It is easier and it is lazier to believe in a Christ that is going to pay my debts for me than it is to grow up in Christ into a Divine endowment, that shall be itself the cure for insolvency and the material of wealth Divine and inexhaustible. You have really done nothing for a poor man by paying his debts for him, unless in addition to squaring his old *accounts* you have dealt with *him* in such manner as to guarantee him against being similarly involved in the time to come. Emphasise as we may the merely ransoming work of Christ, we are not made free men by having our fetters broken off, and we are not made wealthy men by having our debts paid. It is not what Christ delivers us from, but what He translates us into that makes us saved men in Christ. That brings us on to the clear ground of the positive feature of Christian character; and there is no more distinct or comprehensive way of stating that positive feature than to say that it involves being in our limited capacity exactly what He was in His infinite capacity. Christ as we know Him in history is nothing more or less than the ideal man actualised. The essential features of Christ we are therefore to look upon as prescriptive. Christ's being, His experience, His relations to men, the attitude in which He stood towards what concerned His contemporaries, the feelings which their concerns excited in Him—all of that becomes practically just so much direct ordinance binding itself upon us closely and authoritatively. What He was in His Divine way we are bound to become in our human way.

¶ You cannot drift down the tide of event and be a Christ man or a Christ woman. The world is to be saved; the tide is to be reversed. Man inspired of God is to do it; and you cannot buckle yourself down to that problem in Christian wholeheartedness and not grow sober under it. A thousand torchlights and ten thousand brass bands will not convert the world-tragedy into a world-comedy, or crinkle the fixed lines of your seriousness into merriment. Now you see the philosophy of the sober Christ. He flung Himself against forty centuries of bad event, and the Divine Man was bruised by the impact. He stood up

and let forty centuries jump on Him; He held His own, but blood brake through His pores in perspiration, and about that there is nothing humorous.[1]

3. We reject Christ when we refuse to relieve suffering.

There is an evil which is done in this world by the "want of thought"; that is the sin of those who go through life, not suspecting, and not caring to inquire, how much there is of human desolation. And there is an evil which is done in this world by "the want of heart"; that is the sin of those who are familiar with all that you can tell them of misery, and still go on feasting, and dressing, and amusing themselves, and doling out with a grudge the driblets of their income in the sacred cause of benevolence.

If ever you feel disposed in this manner to turn away from the afflicted, you will do well to check yourself with the question, "Am I not, in fact, behaving as the Jews did when they turned away from our Saviour?" "He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and, therefore, "they hid as it were their faces from Him." Surely if we hide our face, peevishly or contemptuously, from any one of His afflicted and poor people; if we are impatient and displeased with everything, except what encourages our mirth or what helps us in our day's work; we have every reason to think that we too should have hidden our faces from our Saviour, had we known Him in the flesh: we should have been impatient and displeased at being called on to look off our business or our diversion towards a person so lowly and little esteemed, so very full of infirmities and sufferings. The history of our Lord's life and death is full of instances of this sort of temper; but none perhaps so remarkable as in the case of the two thieves who were crucified by His side. Even in the very agony of their own death, and that the most painful and shameful of deaths, both of them at first, and one as it would seem to the end, could find it in their hearts to revile our Lord for His sufferings. "If Thou be Christ," they tauntingly said, "save Thyself and us." They cast in His teeth the same reproach as the haughty Roman soldiers and self-satisfied

[1] C. H. Parkhurst.

Pharisees did: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." Those dying and blaspheming malefactors were the very type of the world's proud and cruel nature, rejecting and disdaining all fellowship with the poor and afflicted, and refusing to be saved by sufferings, even the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

¶ I question if there is more than one heresy that is bad enough to keep a man out of the kingdom of heaven—that is, the heresy of trying to be in heaven to-day, at the same time that the world is full of men who by their sins and burdens and distresses are already in hell to-day.[1]

II.

Christ a Man of Sorrows.

i. *The Occasion of His Sorrow.*

1. *His own life was sorrowful.*—He was away from home; from His Father's presence. He was a stranger—and made continually to feel it—in a strange land. From His childhood He was full of thoughts which He could not utter; because, if uttered, they were not understood.

He was a lonely man. Those who loved Him knew Him not. They were constantly misreading His intentions, thwarting His purposes, and suggesting a line of action which was not His own. While they were faithful to Him, they could not understand Him. It was a constant struggle for Him to convey spiritual thoughts to the carnal, and heavenly ideas to the earthly-minded. At last they deserted Him; all forsook Him and fled.

2. *His care for others made Him sorrowful.*—Christ's first acquaintance with sorrow was by sympathy. To sympathise is simply this, to feel with those who suffer. It is the instinct of a kindly heart. It is the obedience to that law of Christian duty which bids us "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." It is the rising, the almost spontaneous rising, of the emotion of pity in the bosom. You do not bid the feeling come. It comes. That is passive know-

[1] C. H. Parkhurst.

ledge of misery. When we have thrilled over the anguish that we see, there is a sense in which we are acquainted with grief. In this knowledge, our Redeemer's heart was rich. We will take but two cases which belong to our present purpose, the case of poverty, and the case of corporeal maladies. It was a most distinguishing feature of the life of Jesus, the compassion which He felt for the degraded, neglected, unbefriended poor. And He sympathised with bodily anguish. He was walking almost all His life through the wards of a vast hospital. The hospital was the world; the sick, the dying, and the mad were lying on their beds, on both sides of Him. At evening "they brought unto Him many that were sick"; and, it is written again and again, "He was moved with compassion."

It was the love which Christ had for the world that made Him sad while doing His work in the world; and the infinitude of His love is what explains the unutterableness of His pain; for the world in which Christ fulfilled His mission was a suffering world. Now a man who is without love can be in the midst of suffering and not suffer. A loveless spirit grieves over its own pain, but has no sense of another's pain, and no feeling of being burdened by another's pain. Love has this peculiar property, that it makes the person whom we love one with us, so that his experience becomes a part of our own life, his pain becomes painful to us, his burdens make us tired. The mother feels her child's pain as keenly as though it were her own pain, perhaps more so. In its Divine relations this is all expressed in those familiar words of Scripture, "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." He was not simply sorry for their suffering, He felt their suffering as His suffering, which is what we mean by sympathy. Sympathy is the form which love takes in a suffering world.

¶ There is a remarkable Talmudic legend (Sanhedrin 98 *a*) which tells how a certain Rabbi one day meets Elijah the Prophet, and asks him when Messiah will come. "Go," replies Elijah, "and ask Messiah himself. You will find him at the city gate; and by this token you will know him, that he sits among the poor and the sick. A man of sorrows himself, he ministers lovingly to those who suffer, and binds up their wounds." The Rabbi finds Messiah, and asks his question, "When wilt thou come, Master?" "To-day," is the reply. Meeting Elijah again, the Rabbi cries,

"Messiah has deceived me; he says he will come to-day, but he has not come." "Nay," answers Elijah, "he is no deceiver; in truth will he come to-day—yes, 'to-day,' as the Psalmist says, 'if you will hearken unto God's voice.'"[1]

(1) His care for bodily suffering caused Him sorrow. This is the first element of our Lord's sorrow. I have often observed that while in churches we take offerings for hospitals, very few people ever visit them. They refer to them in their family devotions, but very few go to them, and some of us do not care to see the woeful sights of suffering; but Christ, if He were to come to London to-night, would not come to church, He would go to the hospital, where they most need His help, His power, and the attestation of His miracles. He is moved to action in the presence of suffering.[2]

What a blessing it is that the medical profession has inherited so much of this high-minded reserve! The delicacy, the consecration and heroism of the doctors of both England and America have always most deeply impressed me. What a day was the advent of this suffering Man for all the sufferings of men—that He who suffered in all things like unto His brethren should so completely and deeply identify Himself with them that suffered everywhere! And so did Christ heal diseases, for as many as touched Him were made whole.

How beautiful, in this connection, becomes the miracle, recorded by St. Mark only, of the healing of the deaf and stammering man by the Sea of Galilee; when He, who had the power, and knew that He had the power, to remove the malady, yet, in the very act of doing so, "looked up to heaven and sighed," as He said the all-powerful "Ephphatha" which bade the deaf ear be opened! That sigh fulfilled the sign given in prophecy of Him that should come. It showed Him, not only as the Almighty One, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; but also as that All-pitying One, in whom dwelt all the fulness of humanity too; as the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief.

¶ There are two epochs in the career of medical life. There is a period in the surgeon's existence when he occupies the position of a student, and belongs to a class of men proverbially reckless.

[1] M. Joseph, *The Ideal in Judaism*, p. 132. [2] S. P. Cadman.

And there is another period in his life when he belongs to a class which all experience forces us to place among the most devoted, the most tender, the most sympathetic of his species. How comes it that the young experimentalist is so marvellously transformed into the benevolent physician? The secret lies in this. In the outset of the profession a man has to look on suffering as a bystander. The recoil and the faintness of human sensitiveness pass off. He becomes familiar with human anguish. He looks upon the contortions of agony with the cold eye of a theorist. The human frame into which the sharp knife is passing is nothing to him but the material for a lecture. Emotion has dulled itself by repetition. This is the passive acquaintance with sorrow. It would be a miracle indeed if all this did not blunt sensibility. For if by God's wise law it did not blunt it, and if the emotion remained as keen as ever, how could the human heart bear perpetual laceration? That is the first stage. But as medical life goes on it becomes a duty not to look on but to relieve. And then he begins to feel the blessedness of benevolence, and once more his heart expands when he sets about doing good. And year by year the habit deepens: the shudder of inexperience, and the mere emotional useless sickening of the heart, which come from witnessing an operation—all that is gone. It was worth nothing after all; and in its place there has come something nobler, something that can be made use of in this work-day world, something even in its way Christ-like—that habit of prompt love which will enable a man to put up with much that is disgusting, and much that would shock the false delicacy of mere feeling, in order to do good.[1]

(2) Mental suffering caused Him sorrow. When He met that funeral procession coming forth from the gate of Nain, with the widowed and now orphaned mother following behind, it was not that He hailed this as an opportunity of "manifesting forth His glory"; it was not that He coldly or roughly restored the breath to the closed lips, or the warmth to the frozen limbs, or the colour to the pallid cheek and brow of death, as One who would say, "Receive the credentials of My Messiahship, and accept Me by this sign as your Lord and King"; no, a human compassion wrought with the Divine power, and marked the Redeemer not only as the mighty God, but also as the Man of Sorrows, bearing our griefs. "When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on

[1] F. W. Robertson.

her"; and when He had bidden the young man to arise, it was "to his mother" that He "delivered him."

And so it was in the more detailed narrative of the raising of Lazarus. Although He thought it needful for God's glory that the death should not be prevented but suffered, and allowed therefore the sisters to think for two days that He was wanting in His care for them, yet how tender was the feeling shown at each step of that wonderful history; from the first mention of the "sleep" of His friend to His disciples at a distance, to the grief shown in the meeting and the tears shed at the grave! That briefest of all sentences, "Jesus wept," how does it carry with it, to all mourners, the assurance of His tender concern for them, who is Himself the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief!

3. *He was a Man of Sorrows because of His contact with sin.*—(1) The daily sins of ordinary life. Many vices were doubtless practised there, in the Holy Land; making homes wretched, and doing dishonour to God. The common sins of a fallen nature were daily committed, no doubt, if not in His sight, yet at least in the full view of His omniscient intuition. These things caused Him sorrow.

We know what positive pain it is to a man or a woman of refined and cultivated tastes, to listen to coarse, bad, vulgar language. Apart altogether from any sin in the thing, the polished educated nature recoils from it, shudders at it. Shut up any one of high mental culture and refinement with the vile, the abandoned, the coarse, and every moment of such an association will be a very hell to that person. The words, the acts, the gestures of the vile will positively torture his spirit. Yet all this gives us only the faintest idea of how deeply Christ's soul was pained by man's sin. From morning till night, and from night till morning, everywhere, always, throughout the whole period of His sojourn upon earth, the holy nature of Jesus must have writhed in torture under what He saw and heard. Lot, as his character is drawn for us in the Old Testament, was by no means a perfect man; yet imperfect though he was, St. Peter says of him that in Sodom he was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked"; ("for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul

from day to day with their unlawful deeds")—2 Pet. ii. 8. If this was so with an imperfect and sinful man, what must have been the agonised recoil of Christ's soul from sin, as it met Him, on every side, working, speaking, and acting in men, when He was here on earth?

(2) There was also the special sin of hypocrisy. He saw religion itself with its very heart eaten out of it in those who professed to be its disciples and even its teachers. It is quite plain that the formalism, the false sanctimoniousness, the utter and absolute hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, was the thing which caused our Saviour on earth the greatest concern as well as the greatest displeasure. It met Him everywhere. He could not go into the Temple without seeing some sign of it. Perhaps there was a Pharisee saying his prayers; for a pretence making long prayers, full of boasting and self-parade; and then going away to devour a widow's substance. Perhaps there was a Scribe teaching the people; laying down the law, professing (unhappily) to lay down *God's* law, to the ignorant but respectful knot of men, women, and children around him; and in all that he taught them there was not one word of truth, not one word of reality, not one idea communicated by which the soul could be nourished. Perhaps, when Christ was teaching, or when He was in the very act of healing, He saw before Him—it happened constantly—some suspicious countenance, some "evil eye" watching His work and lying in wait to accuse. Often the same spirit broke out in open blasphemy. "This man is in concert with the devil. The devil lets Him cast out, that he may be the gainer." The finished work of such men was His betrayal and murder; but the work, in its beginning and in its progress, was harder still for Him to bear; thwarting His gracious designs, and giving at each turn that most painful impression of being in a hostile presence and watched by a hostile eye.

¶ "He was despised and rejected of men." The word translated "men" is a very striking one. It does not occur elsewhere in the prophecy of Isaiah in this exact form; it occurs only twice in all the Old Testament. There is another familiar word referring to man as man that is repeatedly used; but this word is exceptional and refers to men in high places, men of distinction and of influence men who have the forming of public opinion, and who give the

lead to fashion and to sentiment. They are the men spoken of here. The prophet, therefore, in these words describes our Lord's relationship to the polite society of His day. So far it is not His relationship with humanity—we have that later on—but with men who occupied the seats of Moses and of the prophets, who were proud of their distinctions but thoughtless of Him who had exalted them, and unmindful of the duty which such distinctions involved. Was it not so? Who were the men who despised Christ? Who were those who rejected or "boycotted" Him? For if that word were classical, it would be the most forcible and effective translation. In what hearts did Christ first of all find contempt? Who were those who excluded Him from their tables as the poor unlettered peasant of Galilee? Oh, men in high places, who belonged to the polite society of the day, that had its rules, its etiquette, its conditions of entrance into its privileged circle, men who were proud because high, who lacked insight, but sought to compensate for that by an assurance which only conceit begot.[1]

(3) There was also the special sin of treachery. "And Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor." Most wonderful indeed is the record of that Divine forbearance, which treated the traitor apostle, through three long years, on terms of friendship, confidence, and sympathy. All the miracles were wrought, all the discourses of Christ were uttered, with Judas Iscariot standing in the inner circle. And "Jesus knew from the beginning who should betray Him." Can we think of a trial, of a sorrow, heavier than this: to have in your own household, at your own table, admitted to your confidence, possessed of your secrets, one who is hardening more and more into hostility, and whom you know to be marked out as your eventual betrayer? This sorrow was Christ's all along. He had a traitor in His camp, an enemy in His bosom.

(4) But His sorrow's crown of sorrow was this, that He was Himself made sin for others. To see sin was sorrow to the Holy One. To see sin ruining men's lives, teaching in God's name, present daily with Him in disguise, was enough to sadden Him. But He was to come closer even than this to it. "He bare," this chapter says, "the sin of many." It is probably in reference to this, that Christ is called a Man of Sorrows. If we wish to

[1] D. Davies.

see Him in His sorrow, we must go to Gethsemane and Calvary. It was in Gethsemane that the confession fell from Him, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." It was on Calvary that the cry was wrung from His lips, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Surely it was neither the fear of death, nor the presence of death, which constituted the point and sting of that grief. It was no mere remembrance of what He had seen of sin upon earth, no mere anticipation of what sin might yet be in its misery and in its consequences, which expressed itself in those bitter words of anguish. Sin was nearer to Him even than the memory or the foreknowledge. It was then lying upon Him: He was bearing it—bearing it for us—tasting death, not for Himself, but (by the grace of God) for every man. The crowning point of the sorrows was the conscious incorporation with the sin.

ii. *The Reason of His Sorrow.*

1. He was a Man of Sorrows in order to be one of us. Sorrow is a universal fact. It is a fact which is both prominent and arrestive. There is no door at which it does not knock, no portal through which it does not enter, no roof beneath which it does not tarry. Christ Himself trod the Via Dolorosa—the name given to the road which leads from Olivet to Calvary. And for all of us the pathway of life is the pathway of sorrow—

> The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
> Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.

¶ The task which the master painters of the middle ages for centuries proposed to themselves as the highest aim of art, was to realise on canvas the conception of the Anointed One of God. It was their grand work to paint a Christ. And what they made their business was not to turn off a portrait, but to embody the highest idea which genius could conceive of glorious humanity. If the Italian painter, or if the Spanish painter, produced a form which bore the peculiar national lineaments worn by the humanity in his own climate, so far he had failed. He might have idealised the grandeur of the Italian form, or the grandeur of the Spanish form, but he had not given to men's eyes that grandeur of the human species which belonged to a conception of the Son of Man.

He had got a portrait for which a nobly formed individual of one nation might have sat, but an individual of no other. He had got the perfection of the Italian or of the Spanish type, but not the perfection of manhood. Now that which the painter aimed at in the outward form, that Christ was in inward character. He was the essence, the sublimation, of humanity. It was a noble endeavour of the Apostle Paul to be all things to all men. To the Gentile he became as a Gentile, that he might gain the Gentiles; to the Jew as a Jew. But in all this he was acting a single part for a time. He made it his business while the Jew was with him to try to realise the feelings and enter into the difficulties of a Jew. He laid it upon himself as a Christian duty while he was reasoning with a Gentile to throw himself into the Gentile's position, to try to look at things from his point of view, and even to fancy himself perplexed with his prejudices. But directly he had done with the man he wished to win, he laid aside his part. He was neither Jew nor Gentile, but he was Paul again, with all Paul's personality, with all Paul's peculiarities. That which Paul was for a time, Christ is for ever. That which Paul was by effort and constraint, Christ is by the very law of His nature. He is all things to all men. He is the countryman of the world. He is the Mediator, not between God and a nation, but between God and man. He was the Jew and the Gentile, and the Greek and the Roman, all in one. He can sympathise with every man, because He had, as it were, been every man. There is not a natural throb which ever agitated the bosom of humanity that Christ has not felt. The aspirations of loftiest genius and the failure of humblest mediocrity, the bitterness of disappointment and the triumph of success, the privations of the poor man, and the feebleness of corporeal agony—Christ knew them all. He came into this world the Son and Heir of the whole race of man.[1]

2. He was man—a man, therefore "a man of sorrows." In this time-world those two things shall not be severed. Bodily and mentally, the constitution of a son of man is such that escape is impossible. Look at that surface of the human frame which is exposed to outward injury. There runs beneath it, crossed and recrossed in windings inconceivable, a network of nerves, every fibre of which may become the home of pain. There is no interstice large enough to admit between them, in a space that does not feel, the finest needle's-point. Beneath all that there is a marvellous machinery. Man anatomised is like an instrument

[1] F. W. Robertson.

of music. The combined action of ten hundred thousand strings, each moving in its moment and in its place, is the melody and the harmony of health; but if one chord vibrate out of tune you have then the discord of the harp, the derangement of disease. Our bodies are strung to suffering. That we suffer is no marvel, that we want the repair of the physician is no wonder; the marvel is this—that a harp of so many strings should keep in tune so long.

Look next at our mental machinery. These incomprehensible hearts of ours are liable to a derangement more terrible than bodily disorganisation. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear? The inner mind, wrapped up as it seems by impenetrable defences, is yet more exposed to shocks and wounds than the outward skin tissue, and the sensitive network which encompasses that mind is a thousandfold more alive to agony than the nerves that quiver when they are cut. There is such a thing as disappointment in this world. There is such a thing as affection thrown back upon itself. There are such things as slight and injury and insult. There is such a thing as an industrious man finding all his efforts to procure an honest livelihood in vain, and looking upon his pale children with a heart crushed, to feel that there is nothing for them but the poorhouse. There is such a thing as a man going down the hill that leads into the sepulchre, and acknowledging as the shadows darken around him that life has been a failure. All this is sorrow; and just because of the constitution with which he is born. In some form or other this is the portion of the son of man.

And we may remark this also—the susceptibility of suffering is the lot of the highest manhood. Just in proportion as man is exquisitely man, he is alive to endurance. There is a languid, relaxed frame of body in which pain is not keenly felt. The more complete the organisation the severer the endurance. Strong and able manhood suffers more the division of the nerve than softened debilitated frames. So it is with the spirit. The more emphatically you are the son of man, with human nature in its perfection in you, the more exquisitely can your feelings bleed. That which a base and a craven spirit smiles at, is torture to the noblest and the best. It was for this reason that Christ

was in a peculiar sense the "Man of Sorrows." Things which rough and scornful men would have shaken from them without feeling, went home sharp and deep into His gentle and loving heart. The perfection of His humanity ensured for Him the perfection of endurance, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow."

3. He was a Man of Sorrows in order to save us. For one man entirely at ease, in mind, body, and estate, how many, shall we say, are in a condition of discomfort, of conscious disquietude, in one of these respects, or in all? Who is there without some definite drawback to entire satisfaction? The health, or the income—the business, or the family—the affections, or the conscience—the past, or the future—how many could honestly say that in all these things they are entirely and absolutely happy? Now just in proportion as there is a drawback to happiness, there is what we may call a natural affinity and attraction to Christ. Slow as we are to turn to Him in affliction, we are slower still to turn to Him in prosperity. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Not until the lights of earth are dimmed, do men commonly look out for the great, central, all-quickening light of heaven. "When He slew them, they sought Him." And then the thing which most touches them is the thought that the Saviour was a suffering man below; that He tasted not of human joy, but drank to the dregs the cup of human grief; that He was despised and rejected of men, bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, was Himself (in every sense) a Man of Sorrows, and profoundly acquainted with grief. It is this that makes Him a Saviour for all men and for the whole of life: for the sad as well as the joyful, for hours of gloom as well as for moments of gladness.

¶ "When I feel myself in my heart of hearts a sinner," I once heard Dr. Parker say, "a trespasser against God's law and God's love; when I feel that a thought may overwhelm me in destruction, that a secret, unexpressed desire may shut me out of heaven and make me glad to go to hell to be away from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne—then when I am told that Jesus Christ was wounded for my transgressions, that upon Him was laid the chastisement of my peace, I press my way through all

the difficulties and say: If I perish I will pray and perish at the Cross; for if this be not sufficient, it hath not entered into the heart of man to solve the problem of human depravity, and the human consciousness of sin."[1]

iii. *The Way He bore His Sorrows.*

1. He spoke very little about them. Though we are constantly meeting with events in His life which might have caused Him much sorrow, yet only two instances are recorded of His speaking of His sorrow. "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." The other instance is when He exclaimed, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

¶ Dr. Arnold had a sister who suffered for twenty years from a disease which prevented her from ever changing her position. He said of her, "I never saw a more perfect instance of the power of love and of a sound mind. For twenty years she adhered to her early formed resolution of never talking about herself." She bore her painful indisposition without ever talking about it. The biographer of the late Lady Georgina Fullerton alludes to this great virtue in that saintly lady's character. "The gaiety and serenity of her countenance told little of the suffering she underwent from time to time; for her disease was rather hidden than inactive. But she never complained or spoke of her health."[2]

2. Sorrow did not rob His life of its joys. Sorrow often causes people to take a gloomy view of life; to indulge in the utterance of morbid sentiments; to speak of life as "a vale of tears"; to regard everything as "vanity," as though God had withdrawn all brightness, and joy, and beauty from the world, and had left nothing in it but dismal shadows to fall upon the path of man. Our Saviour's sorrow had not this effect. None can discern a spirit of morbidness in Him. We see in Him no disposition to take a dismal view of life. Whatever sorrows reigned within, He never allowed them to impart their sombre colouring to the world without.

After the "Man of Sorrows," perhaps no one had so much sorrow as St. Paul; and yet we fail to recognise a morbid spirit in any of his writings. You search in vain for dismal views of

[1] A. Shepherd, *Men in the Making*, p. 205. [2] H. G. Youard.

life in any of his epistles. In one of those epistles, that to the Corinthians, we find him saying, "I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." There may be solemn and stern views of life and duty set forth in his writings; there may be much that he says which gives us the impression that St. Paul was a distinctly serious man; but there is nothing which conveys the impression that he took gloomy views of life. He was an apostle of hope, joy, and brightness, notwithstanding that he was ever passing through the deepest currents of troubled waters.

¶ Bishop Jeremy Taylor had this rare virtue of refusing to take a gloomy view of life when passing through trouble. Alluding to one of the great troubles of his life, he wrote, "They have taken all from me. What now? They have left me the sun and moon, fire and water, a loving wife, and many friends to pity me, and some to relieve me; and I can still discourse, and, unless I list, they have not taken away my merry countenance, and my cheerful spirit, and a good conscience; they still have left me the providence of God, and all the promises of the Gospel, and my religion, and my hopes of heaven, and my charity to them too; and still I eat and drink, I sleep and digest, I read and meditate; I can walk in my neighbour's pleasant fields, and delight in all that in which God delights." [1]

3. He was not impatient to be rid of them. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." Even in Gethsemane, when His sorrows reached their climax, and assumed the form of an agony inconceivable to us, He added to His supplication for deliverance a "nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done"; which showed that, though wishful to be delivered, if possible, He was not impatient to be delivered.

4. As sorrow abounded so prayer abounded. St. Luke tells us, "And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly." It was an agony of sorrow to which these words allude. We learn from them what we learn from other parts of the Gospels, that our Lord prayed when He sorrowed. But we learn something more. He not only prayed, but He prayed "more earnestly." His prayer was proportioned to His sorrow. The more intense His sorrow, the more earnest His prayer.

[1] H. G. Youard.

5. His sorrows did not keep Him from His work. Even when His sorrows were reaching their greatest intensity, piercing Him through and through, He did not omit His duty to Malchus, to the weeping women on the way to Calvary, to the dying thief, to His crucifiers, to His mother.

¶ A lady of rank, a singularly saintly character, whose life has recently been published, alluding to the death of her only child, wrote: "The eve of St. Philip's Day! the eve of the day when I saw my boy for the last time! It seems as if I had *no leisure* for grief now." Her time was so occupied with her duties that she had no leisure for grief; and so sorrow in her case was singularly blessed by Heaven, and became a great hallowing power in her life.[1]

¶ It was a feature in Queen Victoria's character that she did not allow her sorrows to interfere with her duties. Referring to this, on one occasion, the Duke of Argyle said, "I think it a circumstance worthy of observation, and one which ought to be known to all the people of this country, that during all the years of the Queen's affliction, during which she has lived in comparative retirement, *she has omitted no part of that public duty* which concerns her as sovereign of this country; that on no occasion has she struck work, so to speak, in those public duties which belong to her exalted position."[2]

iv. *The Fellowship of His Sufferings.*

Christ's battle and victory did not set aside, but rather established, the great law, that the evil of the world is to be cured by suffering. The wonderful power and virtue of suffering, so awfully, yet so triumphantly, wielded by the Son of God, was bequeathed by Him to His Church. Not, indeed, in all its efficacies. One result of it, atonement for sin, He alone could attain, and He attained it to the full for all mankind. "By His one oblation of Himself once offered upon the Cross, He made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." And to that perfect atonement, as there *needs* nothing to be added, so it is not in the power of sinful man to add.

On the other hand, there is a work to be done by suffering, in the bodies and souls of the members of Christ's body, in

[1] H. G. Youard. [2] *Ibid.*

which the Head of that body could personally have no part or share. That work is personal, individual purification from sin. In that *He* could not partake, who was eternally and infinitely pure. So that of these two works of healing by sorrow, to one Christ could not come by reason of His purity; to the other man could not attain by reason of his sin.

One work remains common to both, first, without flaw or stint to Christ; secondly, though imperfect and in measure, to us in Christ. This is the drawing, attracting, winning of souls to Christ by suffering; the advancing upon earth of the glorious Kingdom of God.

It was on this account, because of their deep belief in this doctrine, that the Apostles gave utterance to such earnest yearnings to be allowed to be partakers of the sufferings of Christ. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ," says St. Paul, "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." And again: "I, Paul, who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church." And again: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." And so St. Peter speaks: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

¶ I cannot believe that you can have this view of Christian suffering presented to you without your hearts being affected by it. If you regard the sorrows of life that come upon you as chastisement alone, you may be tempted to murmur and repine. If you look upon them too exclusively as means of personal cleansing, there will be in this an encouragement to pride. But if you receive them as the tokens of "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings," as the writing within your soul of the wounded Foot, the torn Hand, the pierced Side, the bleeding Brow, as the embrace of the Man of Sorrows, drawing you to Him, and making you so one with Himself, that the virtue of His Passion passes through you for a far higher benefit and blessing to others than your own active zeal and labours could ever accomplish; this is a consideration than

which I can conceive nothing more powerful to still all rebellious and repining thoughts, nothing that could elevate more, and yet make more lowly.

There is a fable of the ancient heathen (perhaps another of their beautiful allegories) that the nightingale rested its breast upon a thorn when it poured out those melodiously melancholy tones which pierce and ravish the soul.

¶ It is thus with the Christian who sits upon the Cross. Then will his tones be like unto the songs of David's harp, now pealing in the Heavens above, in high accord "with Angel, and Archangel, and all the glorious company of Heaven"; now bringing down the Heavenly strains to sad, sweet sympathy with the sorrows of the Church below, to dispel the fear, to restore the faith, to brighten the hope, to calm the troubled mind, to heal the broken heart of many sufferers with the "song of the Redeemed." Such marvellous power is given, not to those who would serve God in their own way, by pleasing themselves, or according to the wisdom of the world, but to those only who suffer the will of God patiently and gladly, who "glory not, save in the Cross of their Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto them, and they unto the world."[1]

[1] J. R. Alsop.

Vicarious Healing.

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Vicarious Healing.

With His stripes we are healed.—liii. 5.

1. "I PRAY thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" Such was surely the very natural question put by the Ethiopian stranger who had gone to worship at Jerusalem, and returning, sat in his chariot and read this passage of the prophet Isaiah. Even now, with all the light shed upon the interpretation of this passage by the New Testament and by the history of eighteen centuries of Christian experience, men are still repeating the eunuch's question, "I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this?" Some would persuade us that the prophet is speaking of the nation of Israel; others would persuade us that Jeremiah is the servant of the Lord who is led as a lamb to the slaughter; and others again that it is the prophet himself or the better part of the people who occasionally bore the burden of the rest.

Unquestionably there is a difficulty in this passage. And it is just this, that the prophet does speak of the servant of the Lord who occupies so very prominent a part in all the later chapters of the prophet Isaiah,—he does speak of the servant of the Lord sometimes as the nation of Israel, sometimes as the prophet himself, and at other times of a third person. For instance, in the very first place where the servant of the Lord is mentioned—in the eighth and ninth verses of the forty-first chapter—"Thou, Israel, art My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen." And again, in the forty-second chapter, and the nineteenth verse, "Who is blind, but My servant? or deaf, as My messenger that I sent? Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?" The context very plainly shows that he is speaking of the nation at large; and

the prophet himself is spoken of as the Lord's servant in the forty-fourth chapter, "That confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers." But here is one, "the servant of the Lord," who is certainly not the nation if he atones for the nation; and certainly is not the prophet, for the prophet joins himself with the rest of the nation as one of those who need atonement:—"All we like sheep have gone astray."

How are we to understand this? How is it that the servant of the Lord is the nation, is the prophet, is the coming Redeemer? Just for this reason, that the true Redeemer, born of the seed of Abraham, is so absolutely one with Israel that the whole history of Israel and the whole history of Israel's great representative men, whether prophets, priests, or kings, is fashioned on the lines of the great redemption, and can be interpreted only by the life and sufferings and death and victory of the great Redeemer. You will remember that St. Matthew sees the fulfilment of Hosea's words, "Out of Egypt have I called my son," in the going down of our Lord into Egypt in His infancy and His sojourn there. Yet we know that Hosea is speaking of the literal Israel, for he says, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." St. Matthew sees that what is true of Israel is true also of the Christ.

2. Now here we have the great truth of a suffering Messiah, a suffering Redeemer, brought out in all its fulness as we have it nowhere else in the Old Testament. The details are so striking that we cannot wonder that again and again this passage is quoted in the New Testament, as having its fulfilment in Christ. Our Lord Himself sanctions the application when He declares, "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me. And He was reckoned among the transgressors." And Philip's answer to the eunuch was this, "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." No passage in the Old Testament teaches so unequivocally the doctrine of vicarious atonement. True, the whole sacrificial system of Israel prefigures it, for the sacrificer brings the victim in acknowledgment that he is sinful, and that his own life is

forfeit. In the twenty-second Psalm we have the Messiah forsaken of God, persecuted, reviled, spat upon, pierced, done to death, and reaping the great reward of His sufferings in the glory that should follow; but here, and here alone, in the whole of the Old Testament, we have a person, Himself of spotless innocence, entering into the whole fellowship of human suffering, led as a lamb to the slaughter, wounded for our transgressions, having the chastisement of our peace upon Him, bearing our iniquity laid upon Him by the law, making intercession for the transgressors, and receiving as His recompense that He should see His seed, that the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in His hand, that He should divide the portion with the great and the spoil with the strong. I do not wonder, as we read the prophecy with all its minuteness of detail, and as we look down on the ages and search in vain for any figure but One in all history in whom its lineaments can be traced, that in his great defence of Christianity Paley should have based his whole argument from prophecy on this single chapter which he transcribes at length; or that Luther should have said that there is not in all the Old Testament a clearer prophecy both of the sufferings and of the resurrection of Christ.

3. In the text sin is spoken of as a disease. It is a disease, however, which is, humanly speaking, incurable. The only cure is a vicarious one. So we have—

1. Sin as a disease.
2. An incurable disease.
3. Cured vicariously.

I.

Sin as a Disease.

There would be no need to talk about healing if sin had not been regarded by God as a disease. It is a great deal more than a disease, it is a wilful crime; but still it is also a disease. It is often very difficult to separate the part in a crime which disease of the mind may have, and that portion which is distinctly wilful. We need not make this separation ourselves. If we were

to do so in order to excuse ourselves, that would only be increasing the evil; and if we do it for any other reason, we are so apt to be partial, that I am afraid we should ultimately make some kind of palliation for our sin which would not bear the test of the day of judgment. It is only because of God's sovereignty, and His infinite grace, and His strong resolve to have mercy upon men, that, in this instance, He wills to look upon sin as a disease. He does not conceal from Himself, or from us, that it is a great and grievous fault; He calls it a trespass, a transgression, iniquity, and other terms that set forth its true character. Never in Scripture do we find any excuse for sin, or lessening of its heinousness; but in order that He might have mercy upon us, and deal graciously with us, the Lord is pleased to regard it as a disease, and then to come and treat us as a physician treats his patients, that He may cure us of the evil.

1. Sin is a disease, first, because *it is not an essential part of man as he was created.* It is something abnormal, it was not in human nature at the first. "God made man upright." Our first parent, as he came fresh from the hand of his Maker, was without taint or speck of sin; he had a healthy body inhabited by a healthy soul. There was about him no tendency to evil, he was created pure and perfect; and sin does not enter into the constitution of man, *per se*, as God made it. It is a something which has come into us from outside. Satan came with his temptation, and sin entered into us, and death by sin. Therefore, let no man, in any sense whatever, attribute sin to God as the Creator. Let him look upon sin as being a something extraneous to a man, something which ought never to have had a *locus standi* within our nature at all, a something that is disturbing and destructive, a poisoned dart that is sticking in our flesh, abiding in our nature, and that has to be extracted by Divine and sovereign grace.

2. Sin is like a disease because *it puts all the faculties out of gear*, and breaks the equilibrium of the life forces, just as disease disturbs all our bodily functions. When a man is sick and ill, nothing about him works as it ought to do. There are some particular symptoms which, first of all, betray the existence of the *virus* of disease; but you cannot injure any one power of the body without the rest being in their measure put out of order. Thus has sin come into the soul of man, and put him altogether

out of gear. Sometimes, a certain passion becomes predominant in a person quite out of proportion to the rest of his manhood. Things that might have been right in themselves, grow by indulgence into positive evils, while other things which ought to have had an open existence are suppressed until the suppression becomes a crime. As long as a man is under the power of sin, his soul is under the power of a disease which has disturbed all his faculties, and taken away the correct action from every part of his being.

3. Sin is a disease because *it weakens the moral energy*, just as many diseases weaken the sick person's body. A man, under the influence of some particular disease, becomes quite incapacitated for his work. There was a time when he was strong and athletic, but disease has entered his system, and so his nerves have lost their former force; and he, who would be the helper of others, becomes impotent, and needs to be waited upon himself. Does not the apostle speak of us as being "without strength" when "in due time Christ died for the ungodly?" The man has not the power or the will to believe in Christ, but yet he can believe a lie most readily, and he has no difficulty in cheating himself into self-conceit. The man has not the strength to quit his sin, though he has power to pursue it with yet greater energy. He is weak in the knees, so that he cannot pray; he is weak in the eyes, so that he cannot see Jesus as his Saviour; he is weak in the feet, so that he cannot draw near to God; he has withered hands, dumb lips, deaf ears, and he is palsied in his whole system.

4. Sin is like a disease because *it either causes great pain or deadens all sensibility*, as the case may be; I do not know, says Spurgeon (whose divisions of sin considered as a disease are here followed), which one might rather choose, whether to be so diseased as to be full of pain, or to be suddenly smitten by a paralytic stroke, so as not to be able to feel at all. In spiritual things, the latter is the worse of the two evils. There are sinners who appear to feel nothing; they sin, but their conscience does not accuse them concerning it. They purpose to go yet further into sin, and they reject Christ, and turn aside from Him even when the Spirit of God is striving with them, for they are insensible to the wrong they are doing. They do not feel, they cannot feel, and, alas!

they do not even want to feel; they are callous and obdurate, and, as the apostle says, "past feeling." In others, sin causes constant misery. I do not mean that godly sorrow which leads to penitence, for sin never brings its own repentance; but by way of remorse, or else of ungratified desire, or restlessness such as is natural to men who try to fill their immortal spirits with the empty joys of this poor world. Are there not many who, if they had all they have ever wished for, would still wish for more? If they could at this moment gratify every desire they have, they would but be as men who drink of the brine of the sea, whose thirst is not thereby quenched, but only increased.

5. Sin is also like a disease, because *it frequently produces a manifest pollution.* All disease in the body does pollute it in some way or other. Turn the microscope upon the part affected, and you will soon discover that there is something obnoxious there. But sin in the soul pollutes terribly in the sight of God. There are quiet, respectable sins which men can conceal from their fellow-creatures, so that they can keep their place in society, and seem to be all that they ought to be; but there are other sins which, like the leprosy of old, are white upon their brows. There are sins that are to be seen in the outward appearance of the man; his speech betrays him, his walk and conversation indicate what is going on within his heart.

6. Sin is like disease because *it tends to increase in the man, and will one day prove fatal to him.* You cannot say to disease, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." There are some diseases that seem to come very gradually, but they come very surely. There is the hectic flush, the trying cough, the painful breathing, and we begin to feel that consumption is coming, and very soon—terribly soon to those who love them —those who were once hale and hearty, to all appearance, become like walking skeletons, for the fell disease has laid its cruel hand upon them, and will not let them go. So, my friend, as long as sin is in you, you need not deceive yourself, and think you can get rid of it when you will, for you cannot. It must be driven out by a higher power than your own; this disease must be cured by the great Physician, or else it will keep on increasing until at last you die. Sin will grow upon

you till, "when it is finished, it bringeth forth death." God grant that, before that awful ending is reached, the Lord Jesus Christ may come and cure you, so that you may be able to say, "With His stripes we are healed." [1]

II.

Sin as an Incurable Disease.

If some part of the human body is bruised or cut or broken by an outside force, nature sets about at once to repair the injury. There is a resident power within, which at once comes to the rescue. Steadfast methods of life and growth assert themselves; there is a busy knitting of broken ligaments and wounded tissues, mysterious processes of channelling, forcing new paths of life—all striving to get back on the road towards the specific perfection to which nature had started.

Is there a work of moral and spiritual repair going on analogous to this? Do men's sins heal of themselves from resident inner forces? Is there, apart from the intervention of God and Christ, a coursing stream of health which works out fresh channels, knits together the lacerated moral tissues and steadfastly moves towards life? Does the disposition to steal cure itself, or the sin of impurity, or slandering, or greed? Is there not generally a going from bad to worse until some power from the outside arrests a man? And why? Because sin is a wound inflicted not upon the surface or the extremities, but upon the vitals. It has reached the shrine and centre of implanted life, and the poison is flowing in the streams which should have been for its health.

The inherent life of the body may be able by a quickened effort to repair the partial loss wrought by a force external to itself; but it was no partial loss, no local injury that had maimed and deformed the spirit of man; it was not a merely and wholly external force that still dragged and beat him down from the glory for which God had fashioned him. No, the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint. In the individual and in the race alike the ethical basis of development

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

was conditioned by the perversion of past generations: as the personal and spiritual being woke to self-consciousness he found that in the very depths of his life evil was present with him, and he by sin sore let and hindered in running the race that was set before him.

¶ On the deepest thoughts and the purest minds of the heathen world there had fallen from time to time the passing gleam of a hope that there might be some power which could repair the ruin of a sinful race, and cut off the pitiless entail of guilt and misery. The faith, that, by some mysterious efficacy, a pure act of sacrifice might heal the hereditary taint of an accursed house, lay near to the most clear and constant forms under which a Greek conceived his relation to the Unseen. It was this belief that hindered his great conception of Nemesis from ever approaching to the immorality or despair of fatalism. He believed that a single act of pride or violence provoked a doom which held its course through sin and punishment, and sin and punishment, from one generation to another: he traced the dark bequest of Tantalus, or Labdacus, or Xerxes: and he felt that the power of outraged holiness was astir, and that there would be no peace for the wicked. But he also believed that there was an act which could arrest even the blind and ruthless curse: that the taint by which strength and cunning were smitten and sank down and died, was powerless against the sacrifice of a pure obedience. Such a sacrifice he saw in the utter submission, the prostrate humiliation, of Oedipus, in the self-forgetful righteousness of Orestes' vengeance, in Antigone's allegiance to the heavenly Voice. And from such a sacrifice in every case there came forth a newness of life which could push back the threatening death and wake the voice of joy and health in the dwellings of the righteous. So the thunderous air, the terror and agony of the Oedipus Tyrannus, passes into the solemn, tender stillness of Colonus: and

> The promise of the morrow
> Is glorious on that eve,
> Dear as the holy sorrow
> When good men cease to live.

So in the Electra the same chorus which has sung of the everlasting doom, the ceaseless, weary violence of the sons of Pelops, breaks into a blessing when Orestes' service is fulfilled:—

> O seed of Atreus, after many woes,
> Thou hast come forth, they freedom hardly won,
> By this emprise made perfect.

So does Antigone win deliverance from the black tide of the unwearied curse, and lay hold on the good hope of a love that is stronger than death. But in the cost of each such saving act, in the horror and anguish and cruelty and slaughter which gather round the sacrifice, the conscience of Greece assented to the law that without shedding of blood is no remission of sin: in the narrowness and imperfection of that which even the costliest and purest offering could achieve, it owned that the true healing of the nations must wait for the obedience of One who should be more than man, and for sorrow like unto which there was not any sorrow.[1]

III.

Vicarious Healing.

1. What is Vicariousness? When we speak of "vicarious atonement," what do we mean? "Vicarious" means something that is done by one on behalf of another because he is unable to do it himself. You have an obligation to fulfil, and you are unable to fulfil it, and another fulfils it on your behalf. Your obligation is this: you ought to obey the law of God perfectly, but you do not and cannot. You have, every one of you, broken the law, and you have done wrong against God, for every sin is a wrong against God. You owe, therefore, reparation to God. You deserve punishment, for your sin is a breach of the law, the eternal and immutable law of God which cannot be broken with impunity; and that the majesty of law may be held and God's justice satisfied, you must bear the penalty of transgression. And then, further, you need to have the enmity done away with, which exists between you and God. You need a new heart of reconciliation which will bring you into fellowship and peace with God. How is this atonement, this at-one-ment, to be effected? Plato said, "Deliberate sin may perhaps be forgiven, but I do not see how." How is this reparation to be made to God and to the majesty of His law? How is the guilt which rests upon us to be taken away? Who is the person that is able to take upon Himself all the sin of the world and to make perfect satisfaction to God's holy law, and so to bring us guilty sinners near to God?

[1] F. Paget, *Faculties and Difficulties*, p. 181.

(1) First, He must be a willing victim, laying down His life of Himself freely, for if the punishment of the smallest sin were inflicted on Him without or against His will the justice of heaven would be infringed.

(2) Next, He must be a spotless victim, for one taint or spot would do away with the efficacy of the sacrifice—the sinless alone can atone for the sinful.

(3) Further, He must be capable of offering satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and no man can do this. A man, even a perfect man, cannot atone for all men's sins. He can only clear himself. He cannot open his arms and clasp all men to his bosom and make all their burdens his own. Let him be as philanthropic as he may, the effects of his death as a martyr would be unfelt beyond his own circle. To do a thing which should affect the whole race of man, those who have long since returned to the dust, and those who are not yet fashioned out of the dust, requires surely the same amount of power as where He creates and sustains men. The victim must have the power of God, to take upon Himself all human needs, and weaknesses, and sorrows, and sufferings, and sins; but if He is to suffer for sin, if he is to stand in the place of man and to write with His own hands the lesson that sin should not go unpunished—He must also be man, to suffer as one of us, and for us.

¶ How could man rise towards the specific type when his ruin had reached that spiritual being to which had been intrusted the secret of this perfection? The one answer may be given in words taken from St. Athanasius—None could change the corruptible to incorruption save He who also in the beginning made all things from nothing; none could renew in man the Image of God save the express Image of His Person; none could make the dying to be deathless save He who is the Life, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2. Upon what, then, does the possibility of vicarious healing rest? It rests upon two things:—

1. *The identification of the Healer with those He has come to heal.*—Before they say "with His stripes we are healed," they must be able to say, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." Their life must be His by voluntary

adoption—its perils, its pains, its privations, His! He must be involved in it all. He must taste its troubled life—"drink its sour grape and eat its bitter bread." He must be numbered even with the transgressors—must be content to be taken for one of them, to be misunderstood for their sake, to get near to them, understand them and represent them. And gradually the eyes of the people will open. This one, so unselfish and pure and loving, is bearing *their* iniquities. In bringing misery upon themselves they are bringing it upon Him. For themselves they deserve it, and they expect it. But He is wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities. Nobody can come really to their help and not be involved in their retribution. At last they begin to see the shame and folly of their sin. They never hated their sins when they saw them in themselves, but now they see them in Him, the mark of them in pain upon His face, in agony upon His heart. A new loathing, a new penitence surges within them. They can bear it no longer. The innocent Sufferer draws them out of their captivity, and by His stripes they are healed.

¶ Look at the life of Moses, sent as a national redeemer from the curse and yoke of Egypt. He identifies himself with his slave-brethren, and the wrath of the oppressor falls on him as well as on them. This was the first secret of the confidence he won from them. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." Then look on further, and see how he was involved in all the consequences of the sins of his people. They, you say, deserved those weary, hopeless years of wanderings in the desert; but *he* did not. Yet because he had given himself to them, "he was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities." He had no part nor lot in the sin of idolatry, but he was numbered with the transgressors. He bore more of the burden of shame, humiliation and contrition than they who did the sin.[1]

2. The possibility of vicarious healing depends, in the second place, upon *the power of innocent vicarious suffering.* This is an inexplicable law, but equally it is indisputable. That we need for our soul's awakening to see our sin, not in ourselves, but in another, is a strange truth, but truth it is. Yonder young man has never realised his sins, though he has suffered for them. He is callous and careless, but one day he notices a

[1] C. S. Horne, *The Soul's Awakening*, p. 102.

look in his mother's face, and sees the lines of care about the mouth and brow, and the truth flashes upon him, "That is what my sin has done." Her innocent suffering brings him to himself, and with its stripes he is healed. Or let us change the illustration. Christian people will always differ as to the merits of particular wars, but all Christian people are one in the hatred and horror of war. And if one were to go further one would say that it is not in the actual field of battle, where hate and passion are so strongly mingled with heroism and devotion, that its misery is most realised. It is emphatically suffering innocence that kills the war spirit in us. By these stripes we are healed. Soldiers who have kindled with the fierce excitement and dark enthusiasm of war, when they have come face to face with suffering innocence, have grown sick and sad, and confessed to an ungovernable revulsion of feeling. All the love of war dies out. By the stripes of suffering innocence they are healed.

¶ Yesterday afternoon, as the sun went down, I sat by the bedside watching the wan face of a wife and mother who had prematurely worn out her life in toils for her husband and children, and was even then most absorbed in certain tender parting charges concerning them when she should be no longer able to care for them. "She wouldna be there," said the stalwart but deeply grieved husband, "but for slavin' and slavin' for us." There was an instance of vicarious self-sacrifice. In the annals of womanhood there are many such. And whatever we may think about its justice or expediency, there is something in us which endears to us the person who has obeyed the sacred law, and our pulses beat quicker at a thing which puts fresh honour upon our community.[1]

¶ Stanley, in one of his books on African travel, tells of the crime of Uledi, his native coxswain, and what came of it. Uledi was deservedly popular for his ability and courage, but having robbed his master, a jury of his fellows condemned him to receive "a terrible flogging." Then uprose his brother Shumari, who said, "Uledi has done very wrong; but no one can accuse me of wrong-doing. Now, mates, let me take half the whipping. I will cheerfully endure it for the sake of my brother." Scarcely had he finished when another arose, and said, "Uledi has been the father of the boat, boys. He has many times risked his life to save others; and he is my cousin; and yet he ought to be

[1] F. W. Luce, in *The Treasury*, September 1902, p. 353.

punished. Shumari says he will take half the punishment; and now let me take the other half, and let Uledi go free." [1]

3. The Lamb of God on the altar of sacrifice is a deep and dark mystery. How is it possible that my punishment should lie on Him? What justice can there be in the suffering of the innocent for the guilty? The prophet anticipates the great misunderstanding of the world: "Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Thus was Christ judged according to outward appearance; it seemed as if He were so greviously smitten on account of His own sin. And although in our days no one goes quite so far, yet the mystery of the atonement by substitution is still a stumbling-block. It is incomprehensible to human intelligence, yet Scripture plainly declares the vicarious nature of Christ's sufferings. This is the stumbling-block of the Cross, which has in all ages been an offence to the world. Many have made shipwreck of their faith on this rock, esteeming Christ not as a sacrifice for us, but merely as a martyr to His own cause, and an example of patient endurance. Consequently millions of Christians keep Good Friday in vain; they will not accept mysteries which are too vast for human reason. The Lamb of God, the Divine hostage for our guilt, sinks in their idea of Him to a mere man, who left us a perfect example, but did not obtain grace and salvation, righteousness and peace, for us. Not thus did the prophet speak of Christ: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him." The words are plain enough, He suffers for our sake and in our stead; "he carried our sorrows." To this all the apostles bear witness when speaking of Christ as our throne of grace, as the expiation for our sins. St. Peter writes: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Christ's testimony of Himself is this: "My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"; and the witness borne throughout the New Testament, from that of John the Baptist to the Revelation, is the same; wherever Christ appears, it is in a garment dipped in blood.

¶ "In a large family of evil-doers, where the father and mother are drunkards, the sons jail-birds, and the daughters steeped in

[1] B. J. Gibbon, *Visionaries*, p. 114.

shame, there may be one—a daughter—pure, sensible, sensitive, living in the home of sin like a lily among thorns; and she makes all the sin of the family her own. The others do not mind it; the shame of their sin is nothing to them; it is the talk of the town, but they do not care. Only in her heart do their crimes and disgrace meet like a sheaf of spears, piercing and mangling. The one innocent member of the family bears the guilt of all the rest. Even their cruelty to herself she hides, as if the shame of it were her own. Such a position did Christ hold in the human family."[1]

4. There seem to be three demands made by the human conscience on this great mystery.

1. *It must be an act of justice.*—How is it that God should punish for the guilty? If Christ is innocent, and yet is punished, how is this in accordance with any principle of justice? In the first place, it is certain that we do see every day in our lives the innocent suffering for the guilty, not through any fault of their own, but simply from the circumstances in which they are necessarily placed. When a pious and saintly mother suffers for a vicious son, you say it is unjust. Well, it is part of the constitution of the world. We cannot alter it. It runs through the whole of God's providence. The innocent man who has done no harm suffers for the profligacy and wickedness of those who are nearest to him. Therefore when Christ our Lord put Himself into our place, He placed Himself in the position of one who, though perfectly innocent—and none of us are perfectly innocent—yet took upon Himself the burden of our guilt and of our sins. This is only an illustration. Of course it is not for one moment maintained that we can fathom all the depth of the meaning of the Atonement. How is that possible, when He who made atonement for us is the Son of God? How can we explain all His sufferings, or the meaning of all those sufferings? But surely we can get some glimpse of the love in those sufferings.

Why should the world so greatly wonder that we are cleansed from sin by the transfer of our guilt to another? Surely earthly parents bear the sins of an erring son, both in suffering and in interceding for him. In the act of washing our

[1] J. Stalker, *Imago Christi.*

hands the stain passes into the water and the towel; in cleansing a garment the dust is transferred to the air or to the ground. Why should it be said that God was unjust in letting Christ suffer for us? Did not Christ willingly undertake the suffering? If a friend pays our debts for us, is our creditor unjust in accepting that payment? And surely God is not unjust in pardoning our sins for Christ's sake, since Christ, as the second ancestor of our race, gives Himself up in the name of us all; and since no one can appropriate the precious fruits of this death unless he has in faith become spiritually one with the Lamb of God, in order that, in this communion, he may die unto sin.

Could not God forgive without the suffering of Jesus? There is only one answer: He could not. The reason why He could not is difficult to see, but it is not beyond the understanding. No earthly parallel is adequate. We can only see "through a glass darkly." If a governor pardons a prisoner two interests must be maintained: the government must continue to be antagonistic to crime, and the welfare of the governed must not be overlooked. If God forgives, His own integrity and the interest of His children must be secured. Is this done in the death of Jesus? Does the death of Jesus make us fear and reverence God more or less than we should do otherwise? It must be said that it increases our fear of Him. On the other hand, does the suffering of Jesus make it easier or more difficult for us to sin? It makes it much more difficult. By the death of Jesus God forgives and remains holy, and the people receive an impulse away from sin.

"The Well is deep."
The saying is most true:
Salvation's well is deep,
Only Christ's hand can reach the waters blue.
And even He must stoop to draw it up,
Ere He can fill thy cup.

2. *It must be an act of love.*—Truly this is a great mystery, which we must here contemplate in silent meditation, and which eternity alone can unveil. Every sacrifice was a mystery; every act of laying, as it were, sin upon the victim was

mysterious. Infinitely more so was the death of our Lord. Still, Scripture gives us one master-key by which we may penetrate into this as into every mystery—it is *love*. It was love that could not bear to leave mankind under sentence of death, thus frustrating the object of creation; love could plan out a way of escape, and find means to effect it.

You will often hear it said that God was angry with man, and that Christ turned away His wrath. Holy Scripture tells us that "God so loved the world." He is angry with sin, but "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." And again we sometimes hear it said that the wrath of God was poured out upon His Son. But Jesus Christ tells us, "Therefore my Father loveth me, because I lay down my life for the sheep." So that His sacrifice called forth afresh as it were the very love of God which had been His from all eternity.

¶ In a particular district of France there is a school for poor boys who have neither father nor mother to care for them, and who run homeless about the streets. It is a very good school, and the boys who enter it are cared for and helped to become good men. But sometimes bad boys get in, and boys who will not try to be better. A boy of this sort one day stabbed another in the arm with a knife. Now in that school they have two very wonderful rules: 1st. Bad boys, when they do mischief, are tried by the scholars, not by the masters. And the sentence the other boys passed on this cruel lad was, that he should be kept three weeks in a dark cell, and fed on bread and water. 2nd. But in this school substitutes are allowed in punishments. Any boy may come forward and say he will bear the punishment to which an evil-doer has been sentenced. So, when the sentence was pronounced, the question was asked whether any boy was willing to bear this punishment. And, to the surprise of all the school, the boy whose arm had been stabbed stepped forward and said, "I will bear it in his stead." And that was agreed to, but the master said, "The criminal must take the bread and water to the cell." So the boy whose arm had been stabbed went into the cell to bear the punishment. And the boy who stabbed him carried the bread and water three times a-day to the cell. He went through his task six days. But then he broke down; three times every day to see the pale face of the boy he had stabbed in prison for him made him see how cruel he had been, and he came to the master and insisted on bearing the rest of the punishment himself.[1]

[1] A. Macleod, *The Child Jesus*, p. 78.

¶ When we speak of punishment, what do we mean? What do we mean by saying that our Lord was punished for our transgressions? I do not think that the expression is altogether an applicable one. I was reading the other day a lecture delivered by the Rev. Joseph Cook in Boston, in America, in which he says, "Guilt or obligation to satisfy the demands of a violated law may be removed when the author of the law substitutes his own voluntary chastisement for our punishment. When such a substitution is made, the highest possible motives of loyalty to that rule are brought to bear upon the rebellious subject. If any great arrangement on that principle has been made by the Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of the Universe, that arrangement meets with exactness the deepest want of men. It is the highest possible dissuasive from the love of sin; it is the only possible deliverance from the guilt of sin, in the sense, not of personal blameworthiness, but of obligation to satisfy the violated law which says I ought." And then he gives this striking illustration of meeting the objection that Christ being innocent was punished. He says, "There was a New England schoolmaster—I saw his death mentioned in the papers the other day—who made it a rule that if a pupil violated any law of the school the master should substitute his own voluntary sacrificial chastisement for that pupil's punishment." The pupils were quite willing, and for that reason the measure was effective among them. "One day," he said, "I called before me a pupil, nine or ten years of age, who had violated an important regulation of the school. All the pupils were looking on, and they knew what the rule of the school was. I put the ruler into the hand of the offending pupil, I extended my hand, I told him to strike. The instant the boy saw my extended hand, and heard my command to strike, I saw the struggle begin in his face. A new light sprang up in his countenance, a new nature seemed to be rising within him. I kept my hand extended, and the school was in tears. The boy struck once, and he himself burst into tears. I constantly watched his face, and it seemed in a bath of fire, giving him a new nature. The boy seemed transformed by the idea that I should take the chastisement in place of his punishment. He went back to his seat, and ever after was one of the most docile of all the pupils in the school, although at first he had been one of the rudest." Have we not here a glimpse of the principle on which the atonement operates? In the example was the master punished? Strictly speaking, no. Was he guilty? Certainly not. Was the personal demerit of the pupil transferred to the master? No. What was it that happened? He voluntarily accepted the chastisement instead of the pupil's punishment.

Punishment, strictly speaking, is inflicted for personal guilt. Chastisement may be inflicted for the improvement of him who suffers it, or for the benefit of those who witness it, but the latter does not imply guilt.[1]

¶ Dr. Lowson of Hull, who died in a London nursing home on 14th March 1906, had had a distinguished career, and was one of the most skilful surgeons in the country. Whilst in practice in Huddersfield he was called upon to perform the operation of tracheotomy for diphtheria. The tube suddenly became blocked, and with no thought for himself Dr. Lowson at once sucked the wound and rescued the patient from imminent death. Within a few days he was himself stricken with the disease, and, owing to serious complications which it left behind, he was incapacitated from work for a year. For his noble act he received the Albert Medal. The illness which has resulted in his death commenced through blood-poisoning caused through pricking his finger whilst performing an operation for appendicitis without fee.[2]

3. *It must not be in vain.*—This demand is met by the prophet in a later verse of this same chapter—"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Here it is enough to notice the fundamental fact that Christ died *once for all.* The penalty, paid once, cannot be exacted twice. And so they who die with Him are free from the fear of a second death, or of any form of punishment. Death hath no longer any dominion over them. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. And, more than that, Christ, being made a curse for us, has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, *that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us.*

¶ Recall Joseph Cook's illustration. Suppose the boy had been called up and punished a second time, after the master had been chastised, would that have been right? The master accepted the chastisement voluntarily, and now he cannot call up that boy and punish him again. The school would say it was wrong. Why? What has the master done? He has paid the debt of the boy to the school, and to the law which he broke, but the master is not to blame. In this, which we can understand as a human transaction, we may perhaps catch a glimpse of an infinitely greater transaction, which we call the Atonement. In the case of the scholar guilt meant two things. Where there is personal blameworthiness, there is the obligation to do something to pay the debt due to the school and to the law. It is eternally true of the boy that the violation of the law, his personal demerit,

[1] Bishop J. J. S. Perowne. [2] *Daily News*, 16th March 1906.

was not transferred to the master; only his obligation to pay the debt is removed by the voluntary sacrifice of the master. Now I understand when that is done by a voluntary act of the master, a motive has been brought to bear on the boy which will transform him, if anything can. Nothing can take hold of human nature like such convincing justice and love.[1]

I bore with thee long weary days and nights,
Through many pangs of heart, through many tears;
I bore with thee, thy hardness, coldness, slights,
For three-and-thirty years.

Who else had dared for thee what I have dared?
I plunged the depth most deep from bliss above;
I not My flesh, I not My spirit spared:
Give thou Me love for love.

For thee I thirsted in the daily drouth,
For thee I trembled in the nightly frost:
Much sweeter thou than honey to My mouth:
Why wilt thou still be lost?

I bore thee on My shoulders and rejoiced:
Men only marked upon My shoulders borne
The branding cross; and shouted hungry-voiced,
Or wagged their heads in scorn.

Thee did nails grave upon My hands, thy name
Did thorns for frontlets stamp between Mine eyes:
I, Holy One, put on thy guilt and shame;
I, God, Priest, Sacrifice.

A thief upon My right hand and My left;
Six hours alone, athirst, in misery:
At length in death one smote My heart and cleft
A hiding-place for thee.

Nailed to the racking cross, than bed of down
More dear, whereon to stretch Myself and sleep:
So did I win a kingdom—Share My crown;
A harvest—Come and reap.[2]

[1] Bishop Perowne.

[2] Christina G. Rossetti.

Our Sin-bearer.

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Our Sin-bearer.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.—liii. 6.

We do not know, and there is no gain in guessing, who the sufferer was who is thus commemorated. "Vicarious suffering," it has been said, "is not a dogmatic but an experimental truth . . . a great living fact of human experience, evident to men's eyes, and appreciable, in its meaning, to their consciences." Somebody —Jeremiah or another—lived a life of absolute self-devotion and, as appeared, of defeat as absolute, and then he passed away without remark. There was nothing in him to draw the eyes of his contemporaries, nothing but his sufferings, from which, as average healthy creatures, they were rather inclined to turn away. He was one from whom men hide their faces, seeking to avoid him on the street; and he made so little impression on his age that the writer adds, "Who of his generation even considered that he had ceased to live?" Whatever the nobility of his life may have been, that was the extent of its prosperity—a failure which had not even the compensation of publicity.

And yet when that life was over it somehow refused to be done. It is no uncommon experience for us to discover, weeks or months after an event, that we have been more observant than we imagined. When a situation, which in no way concerned us at the time, is recalled in memory, fragmentary impressions come drifting back, words which unconsciously we had marked, looks which had been noted; and we fit them together so that we begin actually to understand the episode from which we fancied we had carried nothing away. That is how the prophet proceeds. He, also, had been one of the unobservant, but something from that forgotten incident remained, insistent, provocative to the mind; and by degrees he began to spell out the meaning

of what he had not regarded, until in the figure of that forgotten sufferer he found a key to the mystery of God's way in redeeming men. It is by self-devoting love like that, he says, that men are healed, and God's Servant when He comes will surely take that away.[1]

But there is only one Individual in history of whom it is a likeness. The life and death of Jesus Christ—lived and died five hundred years after the very latest date to which any one has assigned this prophecy—fit it feature by feature, tint by tint, as nothing else can. And the minute external correspondences between the prophet's vision and the Gospel story, important as these literal resemblances are, are mainly important as pointing onwards to the complete correspondence between the spirit and functions of the suffering servant of the prophecy and of the Jesus Christ of the Gospel history.

I.

All we, like sheep.

1. *All we have gone astray.*—The speakers are primarily the penitent Jewish nation, who at last have learned how much they had at first misunderstood the servant of the Lord. But the "we" and the "all" of our text may very fairly be widened out so as to include the whole world, and every individual of the race. Iniquity is the universal burden of us all.

¶ In the *Journal of Biblical Literature* for 1910 (Part I., p. 24) Dr. W. H. Cobb points out that the Hebrew word *kol* translated "all" is not an adjective but a substantive, and has the definite article prefixed to it. Accordingly, to bring out the force of the original, he translates this passage, "*The whole of us* wandered like sheep." It is the universe of mankind; there is no break in its uniformity. In the same way he renders Deut. vi. 5, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with the whole of thy heart," for it is not merely an intense love that God demands, it is an undivided love; no part of the heart is to be given to the love of any other god.

(1) The fact that every man is a transgressor of the law of God is the prime fact of humanity, and the all-important truth

[1] W. M. Macgregor.

needed for the apprehension of the very rudiments of the Gospel. We shall never know what we need, or be able to understand what Christianity, as gathered in Christ—who is Christianity—offers to do for us, unless our eyes are opened and our consciences made sensitive to the unwelcome but undeniable truth that we all "have sinned and come short of the glory of God." I believe that almost all of the mistaken and unworthy conceptions of Christianity which have afflicted and do afflict the world are directly traceable to this—the failure to apprehend the radical fact affecting men's condition that they are all sinful, and therefore separated from God.[1]

There are differences immensely important in other respects between men, differences of culture, of talent, of opportunity; differences of outward life: some living respectable, decent, cleanly lives, full of many virtues and many graces; some, perhaps, having done many a thing that, if it did not bring them within the grip of criminal law, at least sets them outside the decent, respectable classes of society. But, whatever may be the superficial differences, down below there is identity; and beneath all varieties of garb and vesture, and all diversities of culture, intelligence, profession, and all differences of degrees of civilisation and of rank and position, wise man and fool, cultured man and savage, saint and criminal, loftiest and lowliest, all are alike in this, that they have sinned.

¶ "*Gone Astray!*" Two little words spoken in a moment, but how humbling to man's pride!

There are men of great intellectual grasp and culture. They have swept the heavens with telescopes, and searched them out. They have explored and mastered the secrets of the earth. To them science and art have laid bare their treasures. We admire and honour them. We do well; for their discoveries confer immense benefits upon the human race. But God looks down upon every one of them by nature, and says, "*Gone Astray!*" There are men of great wealth. Broad acres own them as lord, their rent-roll is reckoned by hundreds of thousands of pounds. In addition to this, they are philanthropic and kind. It is joy to them to succour the fatherless, and to care for the widow. With open hand they delight to help forward any scheme which promises to lighten the sufferings of their fellow-men. We love these men. We do well to do so. But God looks down upon

[1] A. Maclaren.

every one of them by nature, and says, "*Gone Astray!*" There are men of the strictest integrity and the highest morality. All their business transactions are conducted with honour; and in all their private relationships they are scrupulously upright. Everybody respects and trusts them; yet God looks down upon them all by nature and says, "*Gone Astray!*"

> If we scan
> The wide or narrow circle of our friends
> And weigh their worth, we find, alas! that all,
> Even in the glance of charity, possess
> Some spot; and if we haply mark ourselves,
> We are not perfect! E'en humanity,
> Like the spoilt picture of some master-mind,
> Hath much it may admire, but prominent
> The fault obtrudes! And as when Lucifer
> Poured the dark drop at Eden's fountain-head,
> He poisoned every stream; e'en so when Eve
> The cup of disobedience tasted there,
> She gave to all her children naughtiness.[1]

(2) The verse says first, "all we"; but immediately afterwards it says also, "every one." Each son and daughter of Adam has strayed far away from the fold of the Good Shepherd, and no one is able to find his own way back again. The wilderness of sin is so large that the erring flock gets scattered and separated into innumerable bypaths. Every child of Adam has his own peculiar form of sinfulness. One man hates his brother man; another has not in his heart the love of God. One man's sins are sins of the flesh; another man's are sins of the spirit. The besetting sin of one heart is pride—a high flying sin; while the sin of another is vanity—a creeping thing. Here we find the vice of drunkenness, and there the love of money. The sins of Esau were of a different class from those of his brother Jacob. The faults of John the Apostle were not the same as those of Simon Peter.

¶ John Bunyan, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, illustrates admirably this truth that "we have turned every one to his own way." He does so in the very names which he gives to worldly men and false pilgrims. There are "Obstinate and Pliable," "Simple, Sloth, and Presumption," "Formalist and Hypocrisy," "Timorous and Mistrust," "Talkative," "Ignorance," "Vain-Confidence," and many

[1] Ebenezer Palmer.

others. Some are guilty of "secret faults," and others of "presumptuous sins." The sins of one are black, those of a second are scarlet, and those of a third are red like crimson. Each turns to "his own way."[1]

¶ You have heard Handel's "Messiah." I never realised how beautiful this figure was until I heard the music of this particular part, "All we like sheep have gone astray." If you listen to the music you see the sheep beginning to go astray, and then as the notes are sung out you see one go this way and another that way, and another yonder way. Even in wandering they do not keep together, and that marvellous musician has expressed it in music —one note seems to show which way this sheep goes, and another that sheep, and another that. There is a process of scattering vividly depicted in the whole music.[2]

2. *Like sheep.*

1. Spurgeon has well said that the sheep is a creature exceedingly quick-witted upon the one matter of going astray. If there be but one gap in the hedge, the sheep will find it out. If there be but one possibility out of five hundred that by any means the flock shall wander, one of the flock will be certain to discover that possibility, and all its companions will avail themselves of it. So is it with man. He is quick of understanding for evil things. God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions, the inventions being all to destroy his own uprightness, and to do despite to the law of God. But that very creature who is so quick-witted to wander is the least likely of all animals to return. The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass knows its master's crib; even the swine that will wander by day will return to the trough at night, and the dog will scent out his master over many a league; but not so the sheep. Sharp as it is to discover opportunities for going astray, it seems to be bereft of all wit or will to come back to the fold. And such is man—wise to do evil, but foolish towards that which is good. With a hundred eyes, like Argus, he searches out opportunities for sinning; but, like Bartimeus, he is stone blind as to repentance and return to God.

¶ When I was a boy in my own country, I used to notice that when the clouds were gathering and a storm threatened, the

[1] C. Jerdan, *Messages to the Children*, p. 73.
[2] D. Davies, *Talks with Men, Women, and Children*, v. p. 446.

shepherd would go round the shoulder of the hill and fetch all the sheep that happened to be on the stormy side back under the shadow of a great rock, so that, when the storm at length raged, the sheep were all safely sheltered. The sheep had not the sense to find that place out for themselves, and though the shepherd had done that scores of times for them, yet they never thought of doing it without his aid.[1]

2. It is not written, "All we like wolves, like tigers," but "All we like sheep have gone astray." We do not usually associate the thought of something so silly, so whimsical, so essentially harmless as a sheep with the awful deeps and disobediences of the human heart.

In this assertion of the prophet there is not so much as a hint of hereditary tendencies forcing themselves into uncontrollable action, of innate devilry in man manifesting itself in a species of Satanic concert; it simply amounts to a matter of pitiable moral weakness. Like sheep, like simpletons, have we gone astray. Whether he is right or wrong, this is what the writer says. And it is worth our while to think, to take in the fact, that the prophet-poet uses the word "sheep" in this highly-wrought passage, rather than some word that connotes a very different force, as in tiger, wolf, or snake. If we settle it in our mind that men in large numbers go wrong, not because they must and cannot help it, but because they are fools and will not help it, the conviction may not do much for our natural conceit, but it will probably serve a useful purpose in a more important direction.

A sheep does not intentionally go astray. It nibbles itself astray. It puts its head down to the grass, and begins to eat, and eat, and eat, and at last looking up finds it has wandered far from the flock, and is lost. It was so absorbed in feeding, that it paid no heed to its whereabouts. Men become thoughtlessly absorbed in something or other, and never call halt to look around to ascertain in what direction they are tending. Men get their heads down making money. It absorbs all their energies and all their thoughts, and almost unconsciously they wander far from the shepherd into moral and spiritual perdition. Minor fascinations ensnare us until we forget or ignore the fascinations of our Lord. The sheep of God's pastures stray

[1] D. Davies, *Talks with Men, Women, and Children*, v. p. 445.

away in thoughtless absorption, and become lost in the regions of wild beasts and night. "When He hath found it He layeth it upon His shoulders." He takes us in our moral impotence, and carries us.

(1) Many estimable people are travelling on through life without a suspicion of offence, doing what others do and judging as others judge—like sheep; and it never occurs to them to ask if their world has room within it for the Cross, in which they yet profess to believe. Actually they do not need it and they do not understand it. Walter Bagehot, in one place, speaks of those "gentlemen who revolt from what is coarse, are sickened by what is gross, hate what is ugly. . . . The law in their members does not war against the law of their mind. They live within the hedgerows of polished society, and they do not wish to go beyond them into the great deep of human life." And then, abruptly, he adds, "These are the men whom it is hardest to make Christians." Paul went everywhere, as he says, to Jew and Gentile, testifying the repentance which brings men to God and the faith which casts them on the Lord Jesus Christ; but what have some men to do with repentance or faith? They want to go on as they are, for they have not realised, as this man did, the shame and scandal of the selfish life when once it is seen alongside of an existence more nobly managed. It is still by seeing Jesus Christ in the mystery of His passion that men come to see themselves.

Oft when the Word is on me to deliver
  Lifts the illusion and the truth lies bare;
Desert or throng, the city or the river,
  Melts in a lucid Paradise of air,—

Only like souls I see the folk thereunder,
  Bound who should conquer, slaves who should be kings,—
Hearing their one hope with an empty wonder,
  Sadly contented in a show of things;—

Then with a rush the intolerable craving
  Shivers throughout me like a trumpet-call,—
Oh to save these! to perish for their saving,
  Die for their life, be offered for them all![1]

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul*.

(2) The reason, we are told, why men do certain things and follow certain paths is not folly but fate. That one man works out his salvation, and another his damnation, is not the wisdom of one or the foolishness of the other, it is the necessity of both. It is the accident of having brains and will, or not having them. The theory which has heredity and the accumulation of heredity as one of its essential levers, has taken possession of the popular mind and imagination as never before perhaps in the history of thought. "It has fixed attention on the law in its purely physical aspects, and has made men feel more keenly the difficulty of giving it a moral interpretation consistent with individual freedom." This goes far to explain the change that has come over the working classes during the last quarter of a century in the estimate of the chances and possibilities of their lives.

¶ In the little schooling that fell to my lot, I was fortunate for a few months to come under the influence of a thoroughly high type of a man who recognised his obligations as a teacher to all sides of our nature. Hardly a lesson passed which he did not use as an opportunity to rub in some phase of our duty to God and ourselves. His unwearied insistence was that self-effort and utter truthfulness, or the absence of these, always explain men and their circumstances. About two years ago this good man got together all his old scholars who were above ground and within reach, and it was remarkable how few gaps thirty years had made in the ranks of those who gladly, and with every demonstration of genuine affection, met to do honour to their old schoolmaster. I could not be present, but one of the company writing me after said: "You would have been pleased to see what a prosperous lot we looked, almost without exception. Not one of us has failed to give some account of himself; while many have attained positions of considerable importance; others have achieved comparative wealth."[1]

In the long run fame finds deserving man,
The lucky wight may prosper for a day,
And in good time true merit leads the van,
And vain pretence, unnoticed goes its way.
There is no Chance, no Destiny, no Fate,
But fortune smiles on those who work and wait
In the long run.[2]

[1] Ambrose Shepherd, *The Gospel and Social Questions*, p. 51.
[2] E. W. Wilcox, *Love Never Lost*.

3. We have an evidence which the prophet lacked, an evidence which is outspread over nineteen hundred years, for, with reason or without it, men have everywhere been drawn to righteousness and to settled peace by the contemplation of the Cross on which Jesus died. When they come to that place the burden which has been pressing them hard falls away. The sin itself may remain, the evil bias and the evil habit, but the hopelessness of it has gone, and the dread of God's anger. Jesus, who sought in all things to be one with His brethren, emboldens us to seek in faith for oneness with Himself; and in virtue of that mystical union our pardon is secured. As He associated Himself with us, so we associate ourselves with Him both in His doing and in His suffering. We make His confession ours, the homage due to the righteous will of God, which we cannot render of ourselves, we find in Him. We have no desire to stand apart, living our lives out in ways of our own; we wish to be found in Him, and judged only in relation to Him. Abundantly conscious of weakness and failure, we yet receive through this fellowship of life all the tokens of God's favour: light and peace, and power to make progress. And thus we have assurance through Christ of the forgiveness of our sins. It is not for human effort to restore the fallen dignities of life, as if man were the doer, and God, at best, the observer and rewarder. God is the doer, and you and I receive. He takes it as His business to make life simple, glad, and clean once more, and to attain that end He is willing to go all lengths. "He so loved the world," said John, "that He gave His only begotten Son."

¶ A little girl of six years old was singing, "I lay my sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God." Her uncle was upstairs, sick. Little Annie crept up to his bedside, and whispered, "Uncle, have you laid your sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God?" She went back to her play. But all that evening he was praying to God to forgive him for Jesus' sake. Next day Annie went up to the sickroom and whispered with winning tenderness, "Uncle William, did you do as I told you?" "Yes, I did, I did, and He has taken all my sins away."[1]

As the fond sheep that idly strays,
With wanton play, through winding ways,

[1] W. Armstrong, *Five-Minute Sermons to Children*, p. 87.

Which never hits the road of home,
O'er wilds of danger learns to roam,
Till, wearied out with idle fear,
And, passing there, and turning here,
He will, for rest, to covert run,
And meet the wolf he wish'd to shun;
Thus wretched I, through wanton will,
Run blind and headlong on in ill:
'Twas thus from sin to sin I flew,
And thus I might have perish'd too:
But Mercy dropp'd the likeness here,
And show'd, and sav'd me from my fear.[1]

II.

The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

The evil that we do, going forth from us as deed, comes back upon us as guilt. Flung up, as it were, into the heavens, it falls back again on the head of the man that cast it. And so the text speaks of a recoil of the evil. "The Lord hath made to fall upon" some one "the iniquity" that had been audaciously cast up in the face of the heavens, as in scorn. "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly," but seeing that it only *begins* when "*'tis done*," it is an awful thing to commit the smallest evil. The recoil of the gun bruises blue the shoulder of the man that fires it; and all our evil deeds, according to the old proverb about curses, "come home to roost." There is guilt, and there is habit, and there is the uneasy, or worse, the silent and seared conscience; and there is the disturbance of the relation to God, and there is the flight of peace from the heart, and there is the onward look that says, "If there is a future it is a future of retribution, and every transgression and disobedience shall have its *just* recompense of reward." Is not that a burden for us to carry?—the weight of evil pressing upon us, in its consequences, of guilt, disturbance, irritated or paralysed conscience, and the foreboding that if we get what we deserve we shall get but a bitter weird. "Bread eaten in secret is pleasant," but it turns to gravel that breaks the teeth of the eater.

[1] Thomas Parnell.

Now it needs nothing more than the strength and the wisdom and the patience of the earthly shepherd to restore the straying sheep. But although my Shepherd is God over all, He cannot lead me back by His patience and His wisdom and His strength alone. Something more is required: something momentous, inexplicable, poignant. He must put Himself into my place. He must charge Himself with my sin. He must die my death. *The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

1. *The Lord.*—Who finds for me a rescuer? Who provides me with a Saviour? It is *the Lord.* It is God the Father and God the Judge. It is He whose commandments I have broken, and whose sentence I have incurred. Not, however, without the fullest consent of Jesus, did God assign Him a task so sorrowful and a burden so heavy. The Shepherd's delights were with the foolish and wilful sheep, whom he could not bless without passing through the furnace and the flood. Ah! there is no God like mine. God is Love—God the Father and God the Son; and between the affection of these two I dare not discriminate.[1]

¶ Remember that although the text speaks of that burden as being laid upon Him by the Lord, we are not to suppose that, therefore, it was not assumed by Him by His own loving volition. He bore our sins because He would. The Lord laid them upon Him; therefore the sacrifice appointed by God is accepted of God; but He chose to suffer, and He willed to die, because He loved thee, and me, and every soul of sinful men. There is the secret of the power of the Gospel.[2]

2. *On Him.*—The words, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" are a foreshadowing of the death of Jesus. The man who uttered them was thinking of life. He knew that many righteous had suffered for the unrighteous. Probably he was patiently suffering for others. The whole chapter is the heart-utterance of one who bears the sins of others, who feels the guilt of his fellow-men. Human experience is revealed in these immortal, soul-subduing words. They reveal an eternal principle, and only Jesus expressed it fully in His life and on the Cross.

[1] A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place*, p. 317. [2] A. Maclaren, *Paul's Prayers*, p. 177.

There is nothing unreal in this idea of redemption; it brings the Cross into the movement of the world. Vicarious suffering has been working for good from the beginning. You are familiar with this thought. The Old Testament is full of substitution.

The weak suffer for the strong in the lower grades of life. In the struggle for existence the weakest give place to the strongest. This is always going on. The best survive, and so the quality is raised. Now, does not this involve a kind of suffering? That the many perish for the few to survive, seems so awful a process.

> Are God and Nature then at strife,
> That Nature lends such evil dreams?
> So careful of the type she seems,
> So careless of the single life.

That is Tennyson's note of despair, but he was truer to the spirit when he said—

> That nothing walks with aimless feet.

Out of the loss and suffering there is gain and progress. Let us go a step higher.

The strong suffer for the weak.—The birds look after their young. Savage beasts defend their offspring, and risk their lives in defence. When we come to mankind, there is a greater demand made upon the love of the parents. We come into existence dependent for years upon the help of others. The strong cherish, guide, and support the weak. Professor Drummond has made this beautifully clear in his *Ascent of Man*, showing how there has always been going on a struggle not only for life, but for the life of others.

Then there is the highest kind of suffering. *The innocent suffer for the guilty, the just for the unjust;* and this was fully revealed in the Cross. The evil that men do lives after them, said Shakespeare. Very true, but that is not all. Evil done afflicts the righteous now. It is they who feel the shame of wrong. The pure among the impure, the gentle among the brutal, feel most the shame of impurity and cruelty. Innocent children suffer through the sin of parents, and parents for children. One may bear the disgrace of another. The natural

history of wrong who can trace? Christ was brought under the same law. "He bore our sins in his own body on *to* the tree"; not simply "on the tree," but *onward* through life unto death. "The Divine can never be more Divine than that." If that Spirit was not God in man, we may cease to speak or even to dream of God.[1]

¶ The great mystery of the idea of sacrifice, which has been manifested as one united and solemn instinct by all thoughtful and affectionate races since the wide world became peopled, is founded on the secret truths . . . that you cannot save men from death but by facing it for them, nor from sin but by resisting it for them. All the true good and glory even of this world, not to speak of any that is to come, must be bought with our toil and with our tears.[2]

(1) Preachers have often spoken unwisely, of the offices of Christ, as if the office were the great matter, and not the person who holds it; but the teaching of experience is that offices of the higher sort cannot be discharged at all unless a man have some native bent towards the business. A king will never be made such by his coronation, unless he have within him instincts of authority and of order. A priest can never be made by any form of human education; he must possess the priestly nature, the greatly daring and loving heart, which takes the concerns of man on to itself, and pleads in regard to them in the very face of God. And Jesus, Prophet, Priest, King, was born such. He could not be content within Himself, but must go out to find the sorrows, burdens, perplexities of men, which never seemed to Him alien or remote. As the world is made some one must suffer under these, and He claimed that as His part. All sickness and darkness and evil in the land were drawn together at His advent, and He treated them as no intrusion but as belonging to the ministry on which He had been sent. For His chosen business was to bear the inflictions which have come upon the world of men, acknowledging them as righteous, and thus to bring hope and pardon to the hopeless.

(2) Too much attention has been paid to the physical sufferings of Christ. Especially has the phrase "shedding of blood" been too literally considered. We need not be afraid of

[1] F. R. Swan, *The Death of Jesus Christ*, p. 15.
[2] J. Ruskin, *The Art of England*, § 12.

the word "blood," if only we think of what it symbolises. But, thoughtlessly to use the term is not helpful to the soul. It is a word having very sacred meanings, and should be uttered with great reverence and feeling. The more we dwell upon the terrible bodily agony of Christ, the less wonderful does the Cross become. Because by obscuring the spirit of the Cross, we bring the death of Jesus too near the level of other martyrs, who suffered the keenest of torture and the most horrible forms of death.

We have not to exalt Christ's death by trying to show that He suffered more bodily agony than any other martyr. That may be so, or it may not be so. On one side we can compare Him with others who suffered, but on the other side there is no comparison whatever. It was God, as man, who gave Himself. It was man's Head and representative who poured out His soul unto death. It was not a death not foreshadowed, but a sacrifice that God in humanity was preparing to give. The world waited for One who could atone for all, speak for all, live for all. Moses could not, nor David, nor Isaiah, nor Hosea, nor any good man; they had much of God in them, but needed redemption all the same.

I know of no theory, says Maclaren, which redeems the story of Gethsemane and Calvary from the charge of being the history of a man whose courage collapsed when it came to be tested, except that which sees in the agony beneath the olives, in the bloody sweat, in the awful and pathetic words with which He appealed to His friends: "My soul is compassed about with sorrows even unto death," an element far more mysterious and awful than the mere shrinking of humanity from death. Surely, surely, the Lord and the Master, in the strength of whose name feeble women and tremulous virgins and little children have gone to the pyre and the scaffold and the lions, as to a feast, did not exhibit all that agitation and tremor and shrinking, only because He was afraid of the death that belongs to all men. Ask yourselves how reverence for Jesus Christ will survive in the face of the story of His last hours, unless, as we listen to Him crying, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" we hear the cry of Him who before His shearers was dumb, but opened His mouth at last in that mysterious complaint in which filial

obedience and utter desolation are so strangely blended because "the Lord hath made to light on Him the iniquity of us all?"

¶ What a burdened conscience! It must have been the most burdened conscience in the world. Yet this man was perfectly sinless. How can we account for the anomaly? How can we reconcile the burden with the blamelessness? Easily; nothing can explain the burden *but* the blamelessness. Do you know what sinlessness is? It is perfect unselfishness. And do you know what perfect unselfishness is? It is the breaking of the partition between my life and other lives. You have a large room, beautifully furnished, and a little anteroom, separated by a wall, and badly furnished. You break down the wall and make them one room; and you have lost the prestige of your furniture. The large room has taken in the little one with all its imperfections; it has borne its sins. If it were to become conscious, it would be aware of blemishes within it not its own. So was it with the Divine man. He broke the middle wall of partition between His room and your room. He destroyed the barrier between the large and the small apartment; He made of twain one. He allowed your mean furniture to blend with His costly adornments. He felt your life to be a part of His life. He was mesmerised by love. He looked at His brother's temptations, and said, "They did it unto Me." He bore in His own body the pain of other bodies. It was not the sense of pity; it was the sense of identity—the identity of love. It was His unselfishness that gave Him a universal conscience—"the *Lord* hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."[1]

3. *Laid on Him the iniquity.*—"The Lord hath made to light on Him the iniquity of us all." In the compass of three verses of this chapter, there are seven distinct, emphatic, and harmonious utterances, all bearing on the one thought of the vicarious suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. (1) "He hath borne our griefs"; (2) "And carried our sorrows"; (3) "He was wounded for our transgressions"; (4) "He was bruised for our iniquities"; (5) "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him"; (6) "And with His stripes we are healed." And they are all gathered together in the final word of this text—"The Lord hath made to light on Him the iniquity of us all." I venture to say that if these words, in the variety of their metaphor and the fulness of their description, do not teach the

[1] G. Matheson, *Searchings in the Silence*, p. 146.

Gospel that Jesus Christ bore in His sufferings the sins of the whole world, and bore them away, language has no meaning. Nothing could be more emphatic, nothing more reiterated, full, and confident than this sevenfold presentation of the great truth that He lived and suffered and died for us because He suffered and died instead of us.[1]

Whether we examine the first resurrection announcements of Christ, or His words at one of the fundamental institutes of His religion, or His admonitory appeals to His hearers, or His statement as to His mission, together with the dual proclamation of the Baptist and the prediction of the angel, the same fact is presented to us: the sinless Christ is invariably associated with sin. In the Epistles, not only is this fact conserved; there is an amazing advance upon it. To cite the passages in these early and inspired documents which bear upon the mysterious relationship between Christ and sin, would be to transcribe many sections of St. Paul's letters. Suffice it to say that there are twelve passages in the Epistles which speak of Him as dying for sin. There are three which describe Him as bearing our sins. There are two which say He was "made sin" and "made a curse for us." Twelve passages ascribe to the death of Christ the removal and remission of sins, together with deliverance from their penal consequences. He is said to be the cause of our justification in three; of our redemption in nine; of our reconciliation to God in five; as a propitiation in four; as a priest, six; as a representative, four; while the Scriptures which represent the sufferings of Christ as sacrificial appear in the Epistles to the Romans, the Ephesians, the Hebrews, and in the Apocalypse.

¶ I was once talking to a poor dying woman about the Crucifixion of our Blessed Lord. She was very ignorant and had led a bad life, and it was only now during her last sickness that she seemed to realise that Christ had indeed died for sinners—had indeed died for *her*! She said to me: "I am trying to understand it, but it seems so dreadful, that though I know it must be true, still one half hopes it is not, for oh, how *could* we have done such a thing!"[2]

1. There are two fundamental realities, marking the sacrificial

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] D. Baillie.

ritual of the Old Testament, which indicate two fundamental doctrines, marking the sacrifice of Christ in the New Testament. These are, first, the position which the object sacrificed occupied with regard to the worshipper; and, secondly, the effects, limited but prospective, of the sacrifice thus offered.

(1) The position which the object sacrificed occupied with regard to him who offered it may be gathered from a series of rigid and suggestive regulations. These have to do with the nature and condition of the sacrifice. It was to be offered willingly, but when selected from herd or flock, as the best of its kind, being vigorous in life and without blemish, it was brought to the door of the tabernacle, and thenceforward the completion of the ceremonial was the work of the priest. Before the sacerdotal office was exercised, there was one rite common to all the bleeding sacrifices. God required of the worshipper that "He shall put his hand upon the head of his offering." Now, throughout Holy Scripture, manual imposition is associated with the idea of transfer or communication. The latter explains its use in blessing, in office, in the miracles of Christ and of His followers. The former implies the conveyance of something from him whose hands are imposed to the object beneath the pressure. The ritual of the great Day of Atonement tells us what that something is: "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat." And as the need of the worshipper, whether individual or corporate, was expiation —implying the sense of sin, of guilt, of estrangement from God, and of penal liability—that need was in a measure supplied by the animal sacrificed. To that animal was transferred, symbolically, the sin and the guilt of the worshipper. The death of the animal declared the liability of him who offered it, while the imposition of hands declared the symbolical transfer of that to which death was due. In a word, the worship of the Hebrew economy typifies the doctrine of expiation by sacrificial substitution.

(2) Next consider the effects which in Holy Scripture are attributed to the vicarious offering of Christ. The Levitical sacrifices connect the shedding of blood with atonement. "The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon

the altar, to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." The principle expressed in these words seems to be that of Life for Life. Life is taken that law may be magnified, and that life may be spared; that transgression may at once be condemned and the transgressor condoned, forgiven, pardoned. Ceremonial remission in the symbol corresponds to moral remission through the Saviour. Throughout the New Testament, and conspicuously in the Epistles, to the sacrifice of Christ is attributed the remission of sin. "God hath set forth Jesus Christ a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;" and to the Ephesians, the great Apostle writes: "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."[1]

¶ Nearly one hundred years ago, La Reveilliere Lepeaux, one of the five directors who then constituted the government of France, appealed to Talleyrand as to the forms of worship which might be necessary and helpful to Theophilanthropism. Talleyrand replied: "I have but a single observation to make: Jesus Christ, to found His religion, suffered Himself to be crucified, and He rose again. You should try to do as much." The splendid irony of this sentence is likely to escape us, in our sorrow at the imperfect account Talleyrand gives of the mission of our Lord. He did not die to found His religion. He died "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God," and He lived and died to establish the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, until He comes whose right it is. But Talleyrand's memorable words reveal the greatness and the grandeur of our Lord's work.

2. Where is the justice of it? If I am to trust my soul to this sacrifice, let me see the meaning of it. I do not ask to understand it thoroughly and to the bottom, but at least it should not startle and assail my moral instincts.

Well, is there not a spiritual law of imputation? Do not these two verses reveal the same law, acting very differently, as the warm sun acts differently on slimy marshes and on beds of roses—the law of guilt and penalty stretching away beyond the actual perpetrators of the crime, laying hold on others, involving them in the same ruin?

[1] Dean Lefroy.

(1) Looking first at the spread of guilt to other guilty persons, the very statute-book can tell of crime spreading out far beyond the doers of the act. For example, a murder has been perpetrated. The victim is in his grave. The deed is over. But the account is not closed: the guilt is spreading still; and whoever knowingly shelters and helps the murderers, whoever tries to confuse the scent along which Justice is pursuing the fugitives, that man is an accessory after the act; and if his deed can be proved he will suffer for it.

(2) Certainly it is a great leap from this to the falling of penalties upon an innocent head; because here all sympathy with the crime is absent. But let us return to our example. Let one of those same murderers be convicted and await his doom. You can bear none of the penalty for his sin exacted by his fellows; that is beyond mortal power. But is there not something quite as great which you can do for him? Look at him, paralysed with terror and helpless rage, a pale, inert, sullen creature, stricken to stone, and yet full of rebellion against both God and man. Speak to him now about hell and the broken laws of God; and he shivers, perhaps he bids you cease from torturing him, but his heart is still as hard as adamant. There is only one chance for him, and that is that you should pity and suffer along with him; that you should understand all the strange, aching numbness of his heart, painful beyond any pain; that your eyes should grow dim and your voice be shaken—by what? by your share in his agony, so that you must bear his grief and carry his sorrows, which he deserves so richly, and which you do not deserve at all. There are half-hours of such pleading which leave a man physically aching as after a long day of toil, and mentally exhausted as if he had been stunned by a blow. For that heavy frost upon a guilty soul is its due moral penalty, and the only possible way to uplift it is by taking share with it, by suffering for it, the just for the unjust. The innocent helper does, quite as really as the guilty abettor, though very differently, enter into the spirit of the culprit, and upon him comes a share in the suffering from which he would fain snatch his brother. Or ask any mother who has tenderly pleaded with a sullen rebellious child until the little one melted, after long obstinacy, and was forgiven—ask her whether

this pleading cost her nothing. The shadow of it hangs over her all day.

(3) But no sooner do you carry the process to this point than you become aware that more is wanted, that the principle on which you have been acting must have other and larger applications, or else it exists in vain. For your own heart has not fire enough to melt the heart of ice with which you accept the chill of contact. Your best hope is to become a conductor, by which a stronger compassion may minister healing through His stripes. Try, then, this experiment. Speak of Jesus, of His love, of those keen fleshly sufferings which were the symbol, the outward and visible sign, the sacrament, of His wounded heart. Do this, and the pettish child and the hardened criminal alike will be made aware of the powers of the world to come. They may resist, being free agents, but only by a great and fatal effort. And what draws all men to Him is that sublime and awful sorrow endured for us. Tell me only that He was a sufferer, and His story is still pathetic; but merely as one old, old tragedy among the many which afflict the world. Say even that He loved me; and I may fail, though striving, to return His love. But tell me that He suffered for my sake, because He crossed the fatal circle of my sins, and drew down, like electricity flashing out in lightning, the bolt on His own head; tell me that He intended this, and, for love of me, deliberately broke the bar which severs man from man, made my penalty His own, took my stripes and the chastisement of my peace, and, if I can believe it, I will adore Him.[1]

¶ Wherever there is love, true unselfish love, there is vicarious suffering. I remember at one time being entertained by some friends of mine. Their home was a palatial building amongst wonderful hills, below which wound a broad and majestic river, and beyond the river a splendid city. The house was filled with every evidence of wealth and culture and pleasure. We had spent the day in various delights—in woods and gardens, with music and jest. At night-time, when all the others had gone to rest and the great house was still, and only the candles lightened the gloom of the old panelled room in which we were, my host and I sat together. A great change had come over him. The cheerful smile was put off like a mask. The easy careless talk was stilled.

[1] G. A. Chadwick.

Sad lines marked his mouth, and his head seemed suddenly bowed with age. He told me of a tragedy in that beautiful home—of the wayward child far away, whose sins and sorrows her parents unceasingly mourned. Nothing could make up to the father for the love of his daughter, and in the background of his life he suffered and wept. We all know what that means. The innocent everywhere suffer for the guilty, the loving for the loveless. We form a web of humanity, closely woven, not a series of unknitted threads, and where guilt enters, a quiver of pain passes through the race. It was thus that Jesus suffered. His love, beyond the love of women, made Him susceptible to all the sorrow of the world. As the lightning conductor draws the electric flash to itself, so in the bosom of Christ the flashes and bolts of the world's wickedness buried themselves.[1]

4. *The iniquity of us all.*—Whose iniquity is it? It is that of *us all*—all of us, poor self-destroyed sheep, if only we look to Jesus for ourselves. I vex myself sometimes by questioning whether I can possibly be among the elect whom God has chosen. But did I ever hear of a case in which His sovereignty has hampered His love? Did I ever know of a seeker who came to the Saviour and was refused, because God had not ordained him to everlasting life? The one thing which keeps me from the Shepherd is my unbelief; it never is the Divine decree. I am one of *us all*, and Christ has room for me.[2]

1. The work of Christ is potentially as universal as the sin to which it is addressed. In this our Lord stands separated from every one, who, possessed of an inspiration, sought to aid, to enlighten, to elevate his fellows. One man addresses his best energies to abolish slavery; another to mitigate the humbling pressure of poverty; another to the dispersion of the fogs of ignorance, superstition, prejudice; another to the alleviation of disease and to the advancement of the public health. These are beneficent enterprises, but they are partial, transient, and mainly material. Christ compasses the infinities. He walks amid the immensities of the spiritual, the permanent, the universal, the eternal. These are factors in a conception which never dawned upon the loftiest intellectual day. They were as natural to Christ as His sinlessness.

[1] N. H. Marshall, *Atonement and Progress*, p. 80. [2] A. Smellie.

Our text begins and ends with the word "all." Now, what each of us has got to do is to go in at the one "all," and to come out at the other. I must go in at the "all" of condemnation, by acknowledging that I have gone astray like a lost sheep. And I must come out at the "all" of justification, by believing that the Lord has made my iniquity to light on the head of Jesus Christ.

I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God;
He bears them all, and frees us
From the accursed load.

2. "He hath made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all." Yes! and yet it is possible for a man included in the "all" to have to stagger along through life under his burden, and to carry it with him when he goes hence. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked," says the foremost preacher of the doctrine that Christ's death takes away sin. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. Every man shall bear his own burden." So your sins, taken away as they are by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, may yet cling to you and crush you. There is only one way by which the possibilities open to all men by the death of Jesus Christ may become the actual experience of every man, or of any man—and that is, the simple laying of his burden, by his own act of quiet trust, upon the shoulders of Him that is mighty to save.

Sympathise with a murderer, feel as you would fain have him feel the misery of his condition, and, as the subtle fibres of a strange communion draw you together, as he responds, he begins to feel the softer grief, the contrition which already, in a sense, you feel for him. Your spirit passes into him. But this is only on the condition that he responds. Even so, to have the benefit of Christ's suffering we must consent to enter into His spirit, and to die with Him, that we may also live with Him. As many as are baptized into Christ Jesus are baptized into His death. He is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, when we surrender to His influences.[1]

[1] G. A. Chadwick.

Lord, dost Thou look on me, and will not I
  Launch out my heart to Heaven to look on Thee?
  Here if one loved me, I should turn to see,
And often think on him and often sigh,
And by a tender friendship make reply
  To love gratuitous poured forth on me,
  And nurse a hope of happy days to be,
And mean "until we meet" in each good-bye.

Lord, Thou dost look and love is in Thine Eyes,
  Thy heart is set upon me day and night,
    Thou stoopest low to set me far above:
O Lord, that I may love Thee make me wise;
  That I may see and love Thee grant me sight;
    And give me love that I may give Thee love.[1]

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

The Poor Man's Market.

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The Poor Man's Market.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.—lv. 1, 2.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money"—well may Isaiah be called the *Evangelical* prophet. Where in the New Testament itself will you find a clearer gospel invitation than this? Even the searching cry of our Lord on the great day of the feast, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink," what is it more than this? It is simply Isaiah's call, its unique and moving power being due to no greater freeness or breadth in the call itself, but to the Person who now uttered it. "Come unto me," said Isaiah; but he spoke in the name of another; "Come unto me," echoed Jesus the Christ, and that day Isaiah's Scripture was fulfilled in their ears.

Isaiah is the gospel prophet. And what are the marks of a gospel? These three: propitiation, pardon, purity. In the fifty-third chapter we have the propitiation, the putting of One in the place of others, and making *Him* to be sin for *us*. In this chapter we have the other two, the pardon and the purity. The assurance of pardon is given in vers. 6–9, beginning, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." The promise of purity goes from ver. 10 to the end of the chapter.

Samuel Rutherford has spoken of this verse as setting before us what he calls the poor man's market; and, in like manner, William Rutherford, of Fenwick, of Covenanting faith, declares: "We have here a plain market, even the most pleasant, most substantial, and most glorious market that ever was." And

indeed, when you think of it, you have here the strangest kind of market that you can conceive, in which every maxim of the merchantman is set at naught; in which the only payment is made by the seller, and all the gain is to the buyers, and in which goods the most precious, the most costly you can think of, are given away for naught.

I.

The Universal Hunger and Thirst.

The prophet's call is to every one that thirsteth, to all who are unsatisfied, who feel that their life is not filled up, that there is something which they know they still lack, something they crave for, over and above their present possessions.

At the very outset the question meets us, *Are there any beyond the reach of the prophet's call?* It is to "every one that thirsteth," but are there those who are not thirsty, who are perfectly contented with what they have, and feel no need of anything more? Or does the call of the prophet appeal to all men? It does seem to us that we could point to a contented life which nevertheless does not possess what we know to be the essential secret of contentment. We know men who feel no need of God, who can live on in a world that is full of God and dependent on God, and neither see Him nor feel their dependence; and if we limit our question to this, Are there men who can exist without feeling a thirst for things higher than what we see and touch? the answer must be that there are; and it would seem as if the prophet's call were not addressed to them. But if we allow that call to have its widest meaning, it speaks to all. It is not addressed to every one that thirsteth after God, or after righteousness, or after goodness, or after holiness; but simply to every one that thirsteth; it speaks to every one that is not absolutely contented with what he has. If that be so, then it speaks to the world.

1. There are dormant thirsts. It is no proof of superiority that a savage has fewer wants than we have, for want is the open mouth into which supply comes. And you will all have

deep in your nature desires which will for ever keep you from being blessed or at rest unless they are awakened and settled, though these desires are all unconscious. The business of the preacher is very largely to get the people who will listen to him to recognise the fact that they do want things which they do not wish; and that, for the perfection of their nature, the cherishing of noble longings and thirstings is needful, and that to be without this sense of need is to be without one of the loftiest prerogatives of humanity. Some of you do not want forgiveness. Many of you would much rather not have holiness. You do not want God. The promises of the gospel go clean over your heads, and are as impotent to influence you as is the wind whistling through a keyhole, because you have never been aware of the wants to which these promises correspond, and do not understand what it is that you truly require. And yet there are no desires so dormant but that their being ungratified makes a man restless. You do not want forgiveness, but you will never be happy till you get it. You do not want to be good and true and holy men, but you will never be blessed till you are. You do not want God, some of you, but you will be restless till you find Him. You fancy you want heaven when you are dead; you do not want it when you are living. But until your earthly life is like the life of Jesus Christ in heaven even whilst you are on earth you will never be at rest.

¶ You remember the old story in the *Arabian Nights* of the man who had a grand palace, and lived in it quite comfortably, until somebody told him that it needed a roc's egg hanging from the roof to make it complete, and he did not know where to get that, and was miserable accordingly. We build our houses, we fancy that we are satisfied; and then comes the stinging thought that it is not all complete yet, and we go groping, groping in the dark, to find out what it is.[1]

> More liberty begets desire of more;
> The hunger still increases with the store.[2]

2. But, while dormant desires have to be roused, the prophet's call is really addressed to everybody. Where shall

[1] A. Maclaren, *The Wearied Christ*, p. 116.
[2] Dryden, *The Hind and the Panther*, Part I, line 519.

we find a man who is absolutely contented, who has everything he desires to have, and nothing he would gladly get rid of, who, if only he could find a pleasant enough and feasible enough plan for accomplishing the transformation, would not wish to change anything in his outward condition, or be different in his inward character? Could we choose what we were to have and what we were to be, I imagine few would choose to remain as they are. If this be so, then are we of the number of those "thirsty ones" to whom Isaiah speaks. The whole world is athirst, and the prophet's message is for every creature.

The invitation is as universal as if it had stopped with its third word. "Ho, every one" would have been no broader than is the offer as it stands. For the characteristics named are those which belong, necessarily and universally, to human experience. If the text had said, "Ho, every one that breathes human breath," it would not have more completely covered the whole race, and enfolded thee and me, and all our brethren, in the amplitude of its promise, than it does when it sets up as the sole qualifications, thirst and penury—that we infinitely need and that we are absolutely unable to acquire the blessings that it offers.

¶ The sharp shrill cry of "Acqua! Acqua!" constantly pierces the ear of the wanderer in Venice and other towns of sultry Italy. There is the man who thus invites your attention. Look at him. On his back he bears a burden of water, and in his hand a rack of bottles containing essences to flavour the draught if needed, and glasses to hold the cooling liquid. In the streets of London he would find but little patronage, but where fountains are few and the days are hot as an oven, he earns a livelihood and supplies a public need. The present specimen of water-dealers is a poor old man bent sideways by the weight of his daily burden. He is worn out in all but his voice, which is truly startling in its sharpness and distinctness. At our call he stops immediately, glad to drop his burden on the ground, and smiling in prospect of a customer. He washes out a glass for us, fills it with sparkling water, offers us the tincture which we abhor, puts it back into the rack again when we shake our head, receives half a dozen soldi with manifest gratitude, and trudges away across the square, crying still, "Acqua! Acqua!" That cry, shrill as it is, has sounded sweetly in the ears of many a thirsty soul, and will for ages yet to come if throats and thirst survive so long.

II.

The Vain Search for Satisfaction.

1. The phrase "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" in the Hebrew, referring to the custom of ancient times, reads: "Wherefore do ye weigh money for that which is not bread?" We see here how in their foolishness men are weighing out their lives, spending their energies, wasting their affections upon that which is not bread, and which brings no lasting satisfaction to the soul. The soul is fed and fed, but the sense of hunger remains. The soul is filled and filled, and yet the sense of emptiness continues! The Hebrew term "for that which is not bread" reads more correctly "for that which is no-bread," it is the negative of bread; it is the very opposite of bread. It is that which not only does not alleviate our hunger, but makes us more hungry! It does not fill our emptiness, but makes us more empty than ever! Not only does it fail to satisfy, but it makes us more dissatisfied! Just as salt water not only fails to quench the thirst but aggravates it.

The excessive striving which is so evident to-day betokens a thirsty, unsatisfied world. Men are searching for happiness and contentment; it is natural they should, and they imagine that if they had certain things their hunger would be appeased. The poor man asks for money, the rich man seeks to be richer still, the ambitious longs for fame and power and position, the sensual for the means to gratify his passions, and each fancies that were his wishes to be granted, he would then know what happiness meant, and would be content.

2. In how many ways do men try to quench the thirst of the soul? Some of the most manifest are Sensuality, Work, Privation, Amusement.

1. *Sensuality.*—It is a common endeavour to make the body receive double, so as to satisfy both itself and the soul with its pleasures. The effort is, how continually to stimulate the body by delicacies, and condiments, and sparkling bowls, and licentious pleasures of all kinds, and so to make the body do

double service. Hence, too, the drunkenness, and high feasting, and other vices of excess. The animals have no such vices, because they have no hunger save that of the body; but man has a hunger also of the mind or soul, when separated from God by his sin, and therefore he must somehow try to pacify that. And he does it by a work of double feeding put upon the body. We call it sensuality. But the body asks not for it. The body is satisfied by simply that which allows it to grow and maintain its vigour. It is the unsatisfied, hungry mind that flies to the body for some stimulus of sensation, compelling it to devour as many more of the husks, or carobs, as will feed the hungry prodigal within. Thus it is that so many dissipated youths are seen plunging into pleasures of excess—midnight feastings and surfeitings, debaucheries of lust and impiety; it is because they are hungry, because their soul, separated from God and the true bread of life in Him, aches for the hunger it suffers. And so it is the world over; men are hungry everywhere, and they compel the body to make a swine's heaven for the comfort of the godlike soul.[1]

My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flowers and fruit of love are gone,
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone.[2]

2. *Work.*—It was to a busy people that the words of our text were first addressed. Most probably this prophecy was uttered on the eve of the return of the Jews from captivity in Babylon. Long ago had they looked for deliverance from the miseries of the exile, but when it began to appear as if God had forgotten His people, and as if all their bright national hopes were for ever shattered, it was inevitable that they should seek for some other source of consolation and rest. Many lost hope, lost faith in the covenant promises, and turned to find in trade and worldly aims a substitute for religion. All their splendid powers of heart and mind they transferred to commerce, and joined in the pursuit of gain until, as one has put it, "from being a nation of born priests, they equally appear to have been

[1] H. Bushnell, *The New Life*, p. 37.
[2] Byron, on the day he completed his 36th year.

born traders." Gain now took the place of God. They had been a religious nation, now they became a commercial nation.

The exile in Babylon made money. He increased it by increased trade. He amassed possessions. His body revelled in conditions of ease. His carnal appetites delighted themselves in fatness. He climbed into positions of eminence and power. What else? "In the fulness of his sufficiency he was in straits." The body luxuriated; the soul languished. He drenched the body with comforts; he could not appease its tenant. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up . . . eat, drink, and be merry!" And still the soul cried out, "I thirst," and disturbed him like an unquiet ghost. He spent money and more money, but was never able to buy the appropriate bread. He plunged into increased labours, but his labours reaped only that "which satisfieth not." The body toiled, the brain schemed, the eyes coveted, and still the soul cried out, "I thirst."

¶ It is related that a nobleman, greatly incensed that his sister had married a man of affairs, turned her picture, which hung in the manor house, face towards the wall, and on its back inscribed in crude letters the legend, "Gone into trade." It was the expression of his abhorrence that one who had been nobly born should make an alliance which, in his estimation, was beneath her station. When Israel, by reason of her own iniquities, was led in exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, God turned her picture face to the wall and on it wrote the legend, "Gone into trade." Her history expressed God's abhorrence of her choice between His service and the worship of the world.[1]

He found his work, but far behind
Lay something that he could not find:
Deep springs of passion that can make
A life sublime for others' sake,
And lend to work the living glow
That saints and bards and heroes know.
The power lay there—unfolded power—
A bud that never bloomed a flower;
For half beliefs and jaded moods
Of worldlings, critics, cynics, prudes,
Lay round his path and dimmed and chilled.
Illusions passed. High hopes were killed;
But Duty lived. He sought not far

[1] N. Boynton in *Sermons by the Monday Club*, xvii. p. 51.

The "might be" in the things that are;
His ear caught no celestial strain;
He dreamed of no millennial reign.
Brave, true, unhoping, calm, austere,
He laboured in a narrow sphere,
And found in work his spirit needs—
The last, if not the best, of creeds.[1]

3. *Privation.*—In India ascetic practices have been very widely prevalent from the very earliest times. The mortification of the body, and the self-inflicted penances associated therewith, have been habitually carried to lengths beyond anything familiar to other peoples. Tradition and legend have united to glorify the ascetic, whether human or Divine; religion, as elsewhere, has sanctioned and encouraged his devotion; and the highest rewards of place and power have been within his reach, if only his austerities have taken a form sufficiently protracted and severe. Eastern patience, self-abnegation, and resolution are seen in their strangest guise, in submission to extreme conditions of self-torture and distress. The profession of the ascetic has always been held in the highest esteem, and his claim to support at the public charge by gifts and alms universally allowed. If it is his merit to practise, it is the merit of others to give to him, that his simple wants may never lack supply. And thus on both sides asceticism ministered to spiritual profit, to the actual and personal gain of the ascetic himself, both present and prospective, and to the store of credit which by his generosity the householder trusted to accumulate for himself, so as to win a higher position and birth in the next existence. Part of the secret of the hold which the ascetic ideal has maintained on the Indian mind lies in the fact that, according to the teaching of their sacred books, benefit accrues also to the donor who forwards the holy man on his way with gifts of money or food, or ministers in any way to his personal needs.[2]

¶ A Chinese traveller, describing the Japanese of the early centuries of our era, mentions this interesting custom: "They appoint a man whom they call an 'abstainer.' He is not allowed to comb his hair, to wash, to eat flesh, or to approach women.

[1] W. E. H. Lecky, *Poems*, p. 99.
[2] A. S. Geden, in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, ii. p. 87.

When they are fortunate, they make him presents; but if they are ill or meet with disaster, they set it down to the abstainer's failure to keeps his vows, and unite to put him to death."[1]

¶ "My father, my father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?" Would you not? Swung at the end of a pole, with hooks in your back; measured all the way from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas, lying down on your face and rising at each length; done a hundred things which heathens and Roman Catholics and unspiritual Protestants think are the way to get salvation; denied yourselves things that you would like to do; done things that you do not want to do; given money that you would like to keep; avoided habits that are very sweet; gone to church and chapel when you have no heart for worship; and so tried to balance the account. If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, thou wouldst have done it.

4. *Amusement.*—Another stream to which the world repairs, in hopes to refresh its weariness, is pleasure. Here it thinks to find fulness of satisfaction. In amusement, in gaiety, in excitement, many would find their greatest good. Nothing, they imagine, can be better than to have within reach the means of being constantly amused. So they wander from place to place, from entertainment to entertainment. For a time they may find satisfaction, but as the experiment is repeated, the simpler pleasures and innocent amusements of life pall upon the taste, and no longer yield the enjoyment they once did. New means are sought of satisfying a restless appetite, till we see the devotee of pleasure sinking lower and lower, throwing aside every restraint, and giving the rein to every base inclination of a pampered nature. If gain has slain its thousands, pleasure has slain her tens of thousands.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung."[2]

[1] A. E. Suffrin, *ibid.* ii. p. 96.

[2] Keats, "Ode on Melancholy."

III.

The True Source of Satisfaction.

Men not only make the mistake of seeking rest in the pursuit of such definite things as gain and pleasure, but they make the fundamental mistake of seeking to quench the thirst of an immortal spirit at a human fountain. That cannot be done. The human fountain runs dry, and the soul is not satisfied; for the soul must rest in God, the immortal in the immortal, spirit in spirit, the infinite in the infinite. Nothing short of this will satisfy; the soul's true and only true environment is God; outside of Him there is no rest for a weary world. "Lord," says the saintly Augustine, "Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it finds rest in Thee." More possessions, more pleasures, cries the man of the world, and we shall be satisfied. It is not so. The man in the valley looks up to the hills, and imagines that were he on the top of the peak he sees he would have gained the highest point of the hill, but when he climbs up it is only to discover that there are other reaches yet. It is not by adding to your possessions that satisfaction comes to you. Nothing this world can give, even were you to get it all, is proportionate to your need. Your need lies deeper than you yourselves know, deeper than your own desires; it lies in the immortal part of you, which can be fed with no earthly bread. It is because men think it can that they never find rest. They spend their money for that which is not bread, which cannot satisfy the life of man, which can no more feed the spirit than the wind of heaven can feed the body.

¶ They tell an old story about the rejoicings at the coronation of some great king, when there was set up in the market-place a triple fountain, from each of whose three lips flowed a different kind of rare liquor, which any man who chose to bring a pitcher might fill from, at his choice. Notice the text, "Come ye to the *waters*" . . . "buy *wine* and *milk*." The great fountain is set up in the market-place of the world, and every man may come; and whichever of this glorious trinity of effluents he needs most, there his lip may glue itself and there he may drink, be it "water" that refreshes, or "wine" that gladdens, or "milk" that nourishes. They are all contained in this one great gift that flows out from the deep heart of God to the thirsty lips of parched humanity.

¶ A story is told of a shipwrecked crew who had been drifting for days in a small boat, suffering the horrors of thirst. In the extremity of their suffering, when all hope had been abandoned, a vessel was seen bearing towards them. When sufficiently near, they called out as well as their parched throats permitted, "Water, water." "Dip your bucket over the side," came back, as they thought, the mocking answer. But unconsciously they had drifted into that part where the mighty Amazon bears its fresh waters far out to sea. They were actually floating in an ocean of plenty and were unaware of the fact.

i. *What True Satisfaction is.*

1. *The knowledge of God.*—It is the grand endeavour of the gospel to communicate God to men. They have undertaken to live without Him, and do not see that they are starving in the bitterness of their experiment. It is not, as with bodily hunger, where they have a sure instinct compelling them to seek their food; but they go after the husks, and would fain be filled with these, not even so much as conceiving what is their real want or how it comes. For it is a remarkable fact that so few men, living in the flesh, have any conception that God is the necessary supply and nutriment of their spiritual nature, without which they famish and die. It has an extravagant sound; when they hear it, they do not believe it. How can it be that they have any such high relation to the eternal God, or He to them? It is as if the tree were to say, What can I, a mere trunk of wood, all dark and solid within, standing fast in my rod of ground—what can I have to do with the free, moving air, and the boundless sea of light that fills the world? And yet it is a nature made to feed on these, taking them into its body to supply and vitalise and colour every fibre of its substance. Just so it is that every finite spirit is inherently related to the infinite, in Him to live and move and have its being.

The fruition of God is contemporaneous with the desire after God. The one moment, "My soul thirsteth"; the next moment, "My soul is satisfied." As in the wilderness when the rain comes down, and in a couple of days what was baked earth is flowery meadow, and all the torrent-beds where the white stones glistened ghastly in the heat are foaming with rushing water, and fringed with budding willows; so in the instant in which a heart turns

with true desire to God, in that instant does God draw near to it. The Arctic spring comes with one stride; to-day snow, to-morrow flowers. There is no time needed to work this telegraph; while we speak He hears; before we call He answers. We have to wait for many of His gifts, never for Himself.

¶ While we were passing through the crowded bazaars this afternoon, on our way to visit some of the fine houses of this city, I was very much interested and amused by the number and variety of the street calls or cries. I have been startled in Beirut by shrill warning to look behind or before me to avoid being run over by loaded animals, but here in Damascus one's ears are assailed by many additional calls. Two lads carrying between them a large tray loaded with bread, cried out, "Ya Karim! Ya Karim!" That is not the name for bread. No, it is one of the attributes of God, and signifies the bountiful or generous; and since bread is the staff of life, the name implies that it is the gift of the Bountiful One.[1]

2. *In the face of Jesus Christ.*—We may say that the satisfaction which the soul of man finds final is the knowledge of God, but more explicitly, it is the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In one word it is *Christ*. He, and not merely some truth about Him and His work; He Himself, in the fulness of His being, in the all-sufficiency of His love, in the reality of His presence, in the power of His sacrifice, in the daily derivation, into the heart that waits upon Him, of His life and His spirit, He is the all-sufficient supply of every thirst of every human soul. Do we want happiness? Christ gives us His joy, permanent and full, and not as the world gives. Do we want love? He gathers us to Himself by bonds that Death, the separator, vainly attempts to untie, and which no unworthiness, ingratitude, coldness of ours, can ever provoke to change themselves. Do we want wisdom? He will dwell with us as our light. Do our hearts yearn for companionship? With Him we shall never be solitary. Do we long for a bright hope which shall light up the dark future, and spread a rainbow span over the great gorge and gulf of death? Jesus Christ spans the void, and gives us unfailing and undeceiving hope. For everything that we need here or yonder, in heart, in will, in practical

[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, iii. p. 388.

life, Jesus Christ Himself is the all-sufficient supply, "my life in death, my all in all."

Our blessed Lord appears to have always the feeling that He has come down into a realm of hungry, famishing souls. You see this in the parable of the Prodigal Son, and that of the Feast or Supper. Hence, that very remarkable discourse in the sixth chapter of John, where He declares Himself as the living Bread that came down from heaven—that a man may eat thereof and not die. "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life. My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

See how His promises suit your condition. (*a*) Are you heavy laden with guilt? The gospel message is, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (*b*) Are you groaning under the power of indwelling sin? "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." (*c*) Are you striving to obtain salvation by the deeds of the law? "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (*d*) Are you in temptation? He has been tempted Himself, and knows how to pity you. He has power over your enemy, and can deliver you with a *word*. The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

¶ One of the most accomplished men of his time said, some days before his death, "I have surveyed most of the learning that is among the sons of men, and my study is filled with books and manuscripts on various subjects, yet at this moment I can recollect nothing in them all on which I can rest my soul, save one from the sacred Scriptures, which lies much on my spirit. It is this: 'The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.'"[1]

How is it that Christ satisfies us, and puts an end to all dispeace? Of the streams of the world at which men drink it is said, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

[1] R. W. Pritchard.

but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Christ satisfies us because His gift is a well of water in the soul itself, because wherever we are, whatever happens to us, the source and centre of our spiritual life cannot be separated from us. This is man's victory and end, when within himself he so has the source of life and joy that he is independent of circumstances, of possessions, of things present and things to come. It is this gift that God offers to us without money and without price.

¶ It is related by one who had experienced the horrors of the great African desert, that the thirst which had absorbed all other feelings while it raged, was no sooner slaked, than the feeling of hunger was revived in tenfold violence; and I scruple not to spiritualise this incident in illustration of the prophet's language. The sensation of relief from undefined anxiety, or from a positive dread of Divine wrath, however exquisite, is not enough to satisfy the soul. The more it receives, the more it feels its own deficiencies; and when its faculties have been revived by the assurance of forgiveness, it becomes aware of its own ignorance, and of those chasms which can be filled only with knowledge of the truth. This is the sense of spiritual hunger which succeeds the allaying of spiritual thirst. The soul, having been refreshed, must now be fed. The cooling, cleansing properties of water cannot repair the decaying strength. There must be nutriment, suited to the condition of the soul. And it is furnished. Here is milk as well as water.[1]

ii. *The Price paid for it.*

The words of the text are a paradox. We are invited to buy, yet without money and without price. But it is a paradox that needs little explanation. The contradiction on the surface is but intended to make emphatic this blessed truth, which I pray may reach your memories and hearts, that the only conditions are a sense of need, and a willingness to take—nothing else, and nothing more. We must recognise our penury, and must abandon self, and put away all ideas of having a finger in our own salvation, and be willing—willing to be obliged to God's unhelped and undeserved love for all.

[1] J. A. Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 339.

Cheap things are seldom valued. Ask a high price and people think that the commodity is precious. A man goes into a fair, for a wager, and he carries with him a tray full of gold watches and offers to sell them for a farthing apiece, and nobody will buy them. It does not, I hope, degrade the subject, if I say that Jesus Christ comes into the market-place of the world with His hands full of the gifts which the pierced hands have bought, that He may give them away. He says, "Will you take them?" And one after another you pass by on the other side, and go away to another merchant, and buy dearly things that are not worth the having.

In a beautiful passage in his *Roots of Honour* John Ruskin says that it may become the duty of any man to die for his profession: the soldier, he says, to die at his post in a battle; the physician to die rather than leave his post in time of plague; the pastor to die rather than preach falsehood; the lawyer to die rather than countenance injustice; and the merchantman, he says, to die rather than that the nation should be unprovided or any great wrong be done to the mass of men committed to his care. But here is One who did die for the buyers in His market, who did die that His market might be furnished with infinite stores, who did die that no one coming to His market should ever be sent empty away.

¶ Another cry was made by a man carrying on his back a large leathern "bottle," and jingling in his hands several deep and bright copper saucers, to attract attention, I could hear nothing but "Ishrub ya 'atshan! Ishrub ya 'atshan!" which is the Arabic for "Drink, O thirsty!" That sounded like the Biblical invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Yes; but, according to Isaiah, they were to "buy without money and without price." That man's invitation, however, is very different. By the sale of his sherbet he makes his living, and he who has no money will get no drink; and if he should thus publicly offer to sell wine with or "without price," he would be torn to pieces by a fanatical Moslem mob. I liked the sound of his invitation, nevertheless. And I will only add that it is a most significant and encouraging fact that the colporteur may be seen in those bazaars pursuing his humble vocation, and offering the true "bread" and the water of "everlasting life" to the perishing multitudes in this intensely Moslem city. And the best wish we can express on behalf of the Demascenes is that they may be

brought to accept it, through Him whose Kingdom, according to the inscription over the entrance to their mosk, "is an everlasting kingdom," and whose "dominion endureth throughout all generations."[1]

The selling price is naught; but that does not mean that these goods cost nothing to the heavenly seller. There goods are the cheapest sold and the dearest bought that ever any goods were. Go out by night and see those countless worlds as so many bright gems flashing on the diadem of the universe; all these and all their untold wealth could not purchase one item of the goods in Emmanuel's market-place, for the Son of Man bought them at a great price, and now they are all free. No money can buy them; they are without price because they are priceless; they are without price because, after all, they are not so much sold as given away. He who has them is of princely estate, and princely are all His gifts. The selling price is naught, because already they have been bought and paid for. The selling price is naught, because, truth to tell the buyers have naught to give.

¶ Louis I., on one occasion, sent one of his aides-de-camp to request that a place should be reserved for him at the morning service. "Tell His Majesty," said Leon Pilatte, "that all seats are free and open." "I have often thought," says M. Luigi, "that that little sermon was the best that poor Louis of Bavaria ever heard in his life. No one else would have dared to tell him that God's house is free to all, and that in it all are equal."

Earth gets its price for what earth gives us;
The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in;
The priest has his fee who covers and shrives us,
We bargain for the graves we lie in;
At the devil's booth are all things sold,
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;
For a cap and bells our lives we pay.
Bubbles we earn with a whole soul's tasking;
'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
'Tis only God may be had for the asking.[2]

iii. *The Benefit of it.*

It is unfolded in this chapter. First of all, there is the assured promise of a fuller life. "Your *soul* shall live." "Your *soul*!"

[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, iii. p. 388.
[2] James Russell Lowell.

Hitherto life has been a thin existence, a mere surface glitter, a superficial movement. Now, vitality shall awaken in undreamed-of depths. "Your soul shall live." Life shall no longer be confined to the channels of the appetites, to mere sensations, to the outer halls and passages of the sacred house. "Your soul shall live." The unused shall be aroused and exercised. Unevolved faculty shall be unpacked. Benumbed instincts shall be liberated. Barren powers of discernment shall troop from their graves. New intelligences shall be born. The ocean of iniquity shall ebb, and "the sea shall give up its dead"! "Your soul shall live." Life shall no longer be scant and scrimpy. Your soul shall "delight itself in fatness." Every tissue shall be fed. Weakness shall depart with the famine. "The people that do know their God shall be strong." The tree of its life shall bear all manner of fruits, and "the leaves of the tree shall be for the healing of the nations."

1. The first benefit is, *the pleasure of it*: "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul *delight* itself in fatness." I recollect the time when I used to look upon the precious things of God as many a poor street arab has gazed at the dainties in a confectioner's window, wishing that he could get a taste, and feeling all the more hungry because of that which was stored behind the glass out of his reach. But when the Master takes us into His banqueting house, and His banner over us is love; and when He says to us, "Eat, friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved," then we have a grand time of it, and we feel almost as if heaven had begun below.

2. The second benefit is, *the great preserving power of good spiritual food.* It helps to keep us out of temptation. I do not think a man is ever so likely to be tempted as when he has neglected to eat his spiritual meat. We have this truth, in a parable, for in Him there was no lack of spiritual meat; but, after He had fasted, when He was an hungered, then it was that He was tempted of the devil; and if your soul has been, for a long time, without spiritual food, you are very likely to meet the devil. I have known men go away for a holiday on the Continent, and when they have been away, there has been no hearing of the Word, and, possibly, no private reading of the

Word. Or they may have gone to live in a country town, where the gospel was not faithfully preached; and they have made a terrible shipwreck of character, because their inward strength was not sustained by spiritual meat, and then the tempter fell upon them. There is rather a pretty remark that someone makes, though I do not vouch for the truth of it. You know that, when the Lord put Adam in the garden of Eden, He said to him, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it"; and, says one, "If Eve had availed herself of that gracious permission, on that fatal day, and if she had eaten freely of all the other trees in the garden, of which she might have eaten, she would not have been so likely to wish to eat of that which was forbidden'

3. A third blessing is this. *Spiritual food comforts mourners.* The analogy of this will be found in the Book of Nehemiah, the eighth chapter, and the ninth and tenth verses, where we read that Nehemiah said to the people, "This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. . . . Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." A feast is a good way of breaking a fast. He that eats forgets his former misery, and remembers his sorrow no more, especially if he eats the mystic meat which God provides so abundantly for his sorrowing children. It was of this that Mary sang, "He hath filled the hungry with good things."

4. Spiritual meat has a fourth excellence. *It revives the fainting ones.* Did you ever study the sermon that was once preached by an angel to a desponding prophet? It consisted of only three words, and he preached it twice. The prophet was Elijah, who, after the wondrous victory and excitement on the top of Carmel, fainted in spirit, and was afraid of Jezebel, and said, "Let me die;" and so fled from the field of battle, and longed to expire. In his weariness and sorrow, he fell asleep, and an angel came, and awoke him, and this was the sermon he preached to him, "Arise and eat." And when he opened his eyes, he saw that "there was a cake baken on the coals, and a

cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again;"—the very best thing he could do. But the angel awoke him, the second time, and preached the same sermon to him, "Arise and eat"; and I pass on that little sermon to some of you who feel faint in heart just now. You do not know how it is, but you are very low-spirited; here is a message for you, "Arise and eat." I will not prescribe you any physic, but I say, "Arise and eat." Go to the Bible and study that; search out the promises, and feed upon them. Get away to Christ, and feed upon Him. "Arise and eat." Often, the best cure possible for a poor, dispirited, fainting soul is a good meal of gospel food. Your bright spirits will, in that way, come back to you; you will not be afraid of Jezebel, and you will not say, "Let me die;" but you will go, in the strength of that meat, for many a day according to the will of God. So I give this as God's message to any discouraged, dispirited ones whom I may now be addressing, "Arise and eat."[1]

¶ Hard-pressed, wayfaring men long for a drink of pure, cold water. David cries: "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate"; and often in the country I have known of dying men whose last wish was that they might be strong enough only once more to go to the well and have a drink of pure cold water. One of my earliest recollections is of the time my grandfather lay dying, and we were sent to a famous well, called Fulton's Well, to bring pure spring water; and if at times it had not been convenient to send a messenger, and they sought to put off the sick man with the water from the ordinary well at the farm, he could check it in a moment. And so there is a spiritual thirst that checks the water from Jacob's Well, the clear crystal water from the spring of life:

> I came to Jesus, and I drank
> Of that life-giving stream;
> My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
> And now I live in Him.[2]

5. And it has *a great strength for service,* for he who eats that which is good, and lets his soul delight itself in fatness, will be strong to run in the way of the Divine commands, or to perform any work that may be required of him. You recollect

[1] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit,* xlviii. p. 321.
[2] J. Barr, in *Christian World Pulpit,* lxxvii. p. 341.

what Jonathan said, concerning that long day of fasting to which I have already alluded. Jonathan said, "Mine eyes have been enlightened because I tasted a little of this honey. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to-day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?" Quite right, Jonathan; as the old proverb puts it, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey;" and, for a soul to wait upon God to be fed, is to gather such strength thereby that it can do much more work than it could otherwise have done. Eat well, that you may work well. "Eat ye that which is good," that you may have the delight of being useful in the service of your Lord.[1]

May I reach
That purest heaven, be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardour, feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty—
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion ever more intense.
So shall I join the choir invisible
Whose music is the gladness of the world.[2]

[1] C. H. Spurgeon. [2] George Eliot.

Abundant Pardon.

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Abundant Pardon.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.—Iv. 7.

The Prophet had been commissioned to carry a message to the captive Jews who sat by the waters of Babylon and wept when they remembered Zion. The message was that, heinous as their iniquity had been, their iniquity was pardoned; and that to the merciful and relenting heart of Jehovah it seemed as if they had already endured "double" for all their sins, *i.e.* twice as much as their sins had deserved. Hence he was about to appear for them, to appear among them—delivering them from their captivity, bringing them back with song and dance to their native land, making them the joy and praise of the whole earth. In this word, this message, God was drawing near to them; finding *them*, that they might find *Him*. And the Prophet urges them to "seek Him while He may be found," to "call upon Him while He is near"; that is to say, now that God is approaching them to deliver them, they are to fit themselves to receive, to recognise, and to follow Him, by putting away their unrighteous thoughts, by forsaking their wicked ways, and by turning in penitence, expectation, and faith toward Him who was turning toward them in truth and compassion.

But sinful men, especially when they are suffering the bitter punishment of their sins, are apt to be hopeless men. When you speak to them of the Mercy that is more than all their sins, they are apt to think that Mercy incredible, or at least to doubt whether it is about to be shown to them. As nothing is possible to doubt and despair, as above all the energy of active moral exertion is impossible, God sets Himself to remove the natural incredulity and hopelessness of the men He was about to save.

That His mercy is incredible, He admits; but He affirms that it is incredible only in the sense of being incredibly larger and better than they imagine it to be. *They* might have found it impossible to forgive those who had sinned against them as they had sinned against Him. "But," pleads God, "*My* thoughts are not *your* thoughts, neither are your ways My ways. They are a whole heaven above them. And, therefore, *I* can forgive you the sins which *you* could not have forgiven had they been committed against you. Nay, your very unbelief cannot limit or defeat My mercy. The word I have sent you, this message of salvation and deliverance, *must* do the errand on which I sent it; and therefore you must and will go out of the house of your captivity with joy, and be led forth with peace, the mountains and the little hills breaking forth into singing as you climb them, and all the trees of the field clapping their hands as you march through and under them." So that the main point of these verses is not so much that God Himself is unknowable to us, as that His mercy is incredible to us—incredibly higher, incredibly deeper and wider, incredibly more heavenly and inexhaustible, incredibly more affluent, and tender, and sweet; in fine, as high above our conceptions of it as the heavens above the earth, and so broad that it embraces the whole world of men as the heavens embrace the earth with all its mountains and woods and seas.

¶ This old admonition falls upon modern ears like the once familiar, but half-forgotten, cadence of a song. Time was when such a scripture roused the deepest emotions and brought the sweetest peace to human hearts. Such texts were, within the memory of man, the characteristic foundation of all evangelical sermons. The old-fashioned gospel invitation had an imperativeness, a fine entreaty, which netted magnificent results for the visible Kingdom of God. Men groaned in spirit and fairly ran to Christian altars lest the Divine invitation should be withdrawn. But the old appeal fails to stir men as formerly. Like some quaint hymn or ballad, kept as a sort of relic among the more dashing modern music, this old Bible melody is apparently outclassed by the more philosophical compositions of our day.[1]

There are five things in the text. Three we are to do, and two God promises to do. The three which we are asked to do

[1] G. C. Peck, *Old Sins in New Clothes*, p. 211.

are (1) to forsake our wicked way, (2) to forsake our thoughts, and (3) to turn unto the Lord. The two God promises to do are (1) to have mercy upon us, and (2) to pardon us abundantly.

I.

What we are told to do.

1. The wicked is called upon or invited to forsake his way. That is, he is called upon to give up his sinful habits. Is he dishonest? He is to give up his dishonesty. Is he profligate in his life? He is to give up his profligacy. Is he addicted to intemperance? He is to give up his unsober practices. Is he a profane swearer? He is to give up his oaths. Does he speak what is not the truth? He is to give up his falsehoods. Does he break the Sabbath? He is to give up his Sabbath-breaking. Does he neglect Divine ordinances? He is to give up that neglect. From all his evil ways he is to turn: he is to forsake them, as Israel forsook Egypt, when he crossed the Red Sea; as Ruth forsook Moab, when she went with her mother-in-law to the land of Israel.

¶ The best way for a man is the way which God has made for him. He that made us knows what He made us for, and He knows by what means we may best arrive at that end. According to Divine teaching, as gracious as it is certain, we learn that the way of eternal life is Jesus Christ. Christ Himself says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"; and he that would pursue life after a right fashion must look to Jesus, and must continue looking to Jesus, not only as the Author, but as the Finisher of his faith. It shall be to him a golden rule of life, when he has chosen Christ to be his way, to let his eyes look right on, and his eyelids straight before him. He need not be afraid to contemplate the end of that way, for the end of the way of Christ is life and glory with Christ for ever. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." A friend said to me the other day, "How happy are we to know that whatever happens to us in this life it is well!" "Yes," I added, "and to know that if this life ends it is equally well, or better." Then we joined hands in common joy to think that we were equally ready for life or death, and did not need five minutes' anxiety as to whether it should be the one or the other. When you are on the King's highway, and that way is a

perfectly straight one, you may go ahead without fear, and sing on the road.[1]

2. But the wicked man is not merely to forsake his way, he is to forsake his thoughts. You see, one may, from prudential motives, give up outwardly an evil way, without any change within. From mere self-interest an evil-speaking man may hold his tongue, and yet his thoughts and feelings be as unkind and malicious as ever. From mere self-interest, from regard to his bodily health or his worldly interests, a profligate man may restrain his appetites, and yet his thoughts be still impure. But a mere outward reformation has no value in the eyes of the heart-searching One. There must be forsaking of sin inwardly; there must be a hating of it, and a giving it up in the thoughts and intents of the soul. The fountain, from which the bitter waters flow, must be stopped. The root, from which spring the poison fruits, must be plucked up.

¶ In the third century a great wave of monasticism swept the Church. Men wooed the life of solitude and contemplation, and thought by such a life to escape their evil thoughts. But history testifies to the vanity of such a hope. One of the Church Fathers, Basil, after having sought peace in the quiet of the desert, writes to his friend Gregory, "I have abandoned my life in town, as one sure to lead to countless ills; but I have not yet been able to get quit of myself. I am like travellers at sea, who have never gone a voyage before, and are distressed and seasick, who quarrel with the ship because it is so big and makes such a tossing, and when they get out of it into the pinnace or dingey, are everywhere and always seasick and distressed. Wherever they go, their nausea and misery go with them. My state is something like this. I carry my own troubles with me, and so everywhere I am in the midst of similar discomforts. So in the end I have not got much good out of my solitude" (Basil, *Ep.* ii.). As Basil suggests, the only way is a mortification of the passions, and such mortification can come about only by a new birth, a return unto the Lord. If we ask what conditions best favour such regeneration, we are answered by the life of Jesus, which was not one of solitude alone, nor one of activity alone, but a life in which prayer and contemplation alternated with active service.

Putting the matter broadly and generally: what are the thoughts from which the sin life, in its various outward forms,

[1] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Messiah*, p. 425.

comes? They are chiefly wrong thoughts about God, about sin, about true happiness. Well, those wrong thoughts about God, as if He were so great that He will not concern Himself about us, or so merciful that He will never punish us, or so dreadful in His holiness that He will never pardon us; those thoughts must be forsaken. And those thoughts about sin, as if it were no great thing, as if it were easily got over, as if it were little more than a sort of unhappy necessity, instead of a tremendous evil separating the soul from the Most High and making the sinner liable to His wrath and curse; those thoughts must be forsaken. And those thoughts about man's happiness, as if it consisted in the abundance of the things which he possesses, in earthly honour and prosperity, and not in heart-love and heart-devotion to God and His Son; those thoughts must be forsaken. That whole course of thinking, feeling, hoping, doing, which springs from nature's awful unbelief, must be given up in deep dislike and real abasement.

¶ I remember when we were in Glasgow there was a business man converted, and he was very anxious for all his employés to be converted, and he brought them one after another, and they were blessed. But one man he could not get. He said, "If I am going to be converted I am going to be by the regular stated means." Scotland had got regular churches, and he did not need Americans to come and tell him how to be saved, and he would not come. We went up to the North of Scotland, and the employer had some business to transact there, and he sent that man, and one night we were preaching on the banks of a river, and I was speaking on this text, "I thought." This man saw the crowd, and he thought he would like to see what was going on, and the text reached his attention—"I thought." He listened, and the arrow of conviction went down into his soul, and the man was convicted. Then he began to inquire who was the preacher, and he found out that it was this same preacher that he would not hear in Glasgow.[1]

3. Thus much the prophet teaches us on the negative side, as to what is to be turned from; he goes next to the positive side, and teaches us what is to be turned to. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord." That is implied, of course, in any

[1] D. L. Moody.

true turning from sinful ways and thoughts; without that it would be no true turning from them. Yet it conveys a distinct thought; it brings before us another and spiritual aspect of the truth. And sometimes you may seem to have a large fulfilment to the call to forsake ways and thoughts; and yet there may be no returning to God. That was the case with the Jews of old. They forsook their idolatrous ways most thoroughly; the outward idols were cast utterly away; the names and images of Baal and Molech became their horror and detestation. Even in thought they gave up their old idolatry. That is, they thought it wrong; they disapproved of it; they regarded it with hatred and loathing. And yet they did not return to God.

And what does it mean? It evidently means the soul coming back to the views and feelings it had about God before it went away from Him. "Let him return unto the Lord;" it is just as though it had been said, "Let the Lord Jehovah be to him what He was before the fall." And what was God to man then? God was to man unfallen the Object of his profound homage. He worshipped and adored Him. God was to man unfallen the Object of his supremest love, his Portion, his Delight; in all the attributes of this Divine character he had supreme complacency; dear to him was the righteousness of the Highest, the love, the wisdom, the power. God was to man unfallen the Object of his trust and confidence. God was to man unfallen the King of his heart and his life; His will and glory the end of man's existence. And the returning of the soul to the Lord is the soul's returning to a vital consciousness of God as the great loving One, is the soul's returning to a sense of His infinite majesty and excellence, and desiring to live with Him as before, in love, adoration, trust, submission.

¶ There are three stumbling-stones in man's way to Christ—sin, his own thoughts, and his own way or his own will; and you will find that every man has got to meet and overcome these three obstacles, or, as some one else has put it, three stumbling-stones—human righteousness, human religion, and human wisdom. There is a great deal of religion in the world to-day. A man may be full of religion and yet be a stranger to the grace of God. You will find some of the worst of men in the community are very religious; they have got a religion of their own. You talk with them about Christ, and about His Kingdom, and they will straighten

up and tell you that they would not give up their religion for all the world; but if you press them upon this point of giving up their sins, you will find they are not willing to part with sin. Now man's religion is not worth much if it does not bring him away from his sins. If a man is not willing to forsake his sins, to turn his back upon his past life and his past sins, he cannot be the disciple of Jesus Christ. I have heard men say often, "Why is it Jesus Christ has got so few disciples? The Gospel has been preached eighteen hundred years, and yet Muhammad has got more disciples than Jesus Christ." The question is very easily answered. A man can be a follower of Muhammad and not give up his sins; a man can follow the doctrines of Confucius and not give up his sins; but the reason Jesus Christ has so few disciples is that men are not willing to part with their sins. That is the trouble, that is the difficulty. If men could only get into the Kingdom of God without giving up anything, a great many would flock into the Kingdom, they would rush into the Kingdom by the thousand; but it is this giving up our sins, forsaking our thoughts and our way—that is the difficulty.[1]

Repentance.

Now let us consider what repentance is, and what it is not.

(1) It is not *fear*. A man may be frightened, scared, and yet not repent. That has very often occurred at sea during a storm. When a storm sweeps over the ocean it brings about a great many strange things. You will find when talking to sea captains that a great many men become suddenly pious, men who have been blaspheming for years suddenly begin to pray, and you would think them very religious and repentant, but when the storm has passed over these men go on swearing again. That is only fear.

(2) Then repentance is not *feeling*; a man may have much feeling, and yet not repent. That may sound strange, but it is clearly taught in Scripture. You go down to yonder prison, and you cannot find a man who is not sorry that he is there; but their trouble is simply because they have got caught, they feel very bad because they were unlucky; but let them out of prison and they will do the same over again. That is not repentance. A man may have a good deal of feeling, and weep bitterly for days, and yet not repent. So that it is not

[1] D. L. Moody.

feeling or remorse. Judas had that, plenty of it, so that he put an end to his existence; and a man may be filled with remorse and not repent.

¶ The confession "I have sinned" is made by hardened Pharaoh (Ex. ix. 27), double-minded Balaam (Num. xxii. 34), remorseful Achan (Josh. vii. 20), insincere King Saul (1 Sam. xv. 24), despairing Judas (Matt. xxvii. 4); but in none of these cases was there true repentance.[1]

(3) Nor is it *conviction.* A man may be deeply convicted when he is going out of the house of God; he may know that his whole life is wrong, his conscience may lash him and smite him, and he may say, "My whole life is dark and black." He may be deeply convicted and yet not repent. Conviction is not repentance; making a few resolutions is not repentance; turning over a new leaf, as some men say they are going to do, that is not repentance; nor is it found in good feelings or good thoughts.

A fit of sorrow is no great thing. Who has not had that? There are persons upon whom a penitential mood comes and comes and comes again; and nothing results from it. But this forsaking of the thoughts goes deep into the soul, and means a turning of the whole being towards God. It is quite true that the Bible does not lay stress on mere effervescence of feeling, as if it were needful to pour out floods of tears, or utter cries of agony, or go mourning and grieving for any special number of hours or days, and with any special intensity. Yet it is not conceivable that you should have a person convinced on the matter of his salvation, and changing his thoughts about God and sin, without strong feelings of abasement and shame. Take the type of a penitent, as Jesus gives it. See the publican standing afar off, not lifting so much as his eyes to heaven, smiting upon his breast. There is nothing extravagant in that.

Behold us, how we feebly float,
Through many a changing mood;
How oft one flash of thought annuls
Our firmest choice of good.

We sin, repent, and fondly think
Our will is now made strong;
Our state of grace, restored, abides—
Thou knowest, Lord, how long.[2]

[1] A. H. Strong, *Syst. Theology*, ii. p. 832.

[2] W. Bright.

(4) What is it? Repentance is *turning from.* That is what repentance is. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" It is an afterthought, it is a change of mind. You ask how long a person is to feel sorry for his sins. Long enough to give them up—that is all. A man may have deep sorrow or he may not have much, but he has made up his mind that he is going to turn from his sins to God.[1]

Because I knew not when my life was good,
And when there was a light upon my path,
But turned my soul perversely to the dark—

Because I held upon my selfish road,
And left my brother wounded by the way,
And called ambition duty, and pressed on—

Because I spent the strength Thou gavest me
In struggle which Thou never didst ordain,
And have but dregs of life to offer Thee—
O Lord, I do repent.[2]

II.

What God promises to do.

The two things which God promises to do are (1) have mercy, and (2) abundantly pardon.

1. The Lord, it is said, will have "mercy" on the returning sinner. It is not out of consideration of the wicked man's turning from his sin, or in reward for his heart-turning to the Most High, that his guilt shall be cancelled, and he shall be reinstated in the Divine favour. There is no idea of right connected with this penitential return. What he will get, he will get in mercy —in simple mercy. He is still liable to righteous punishment. But mercy will be his. God will not exact His dues. God, for the sake of His own glory, and in His beloved Son, in Him who died the Just for the unjust, will freely and graciously stay the sentence which sin has merited.

We do not like the word mercy. It is humbling; it lays pride and self-righteousness in the dust. Mercy, all of mercy. It is very humbling. Nor, perhaps, do we best reconcile men to

[1] D. L. Moody. [2] S. Williams.

it by dilating on their helpless, hopeless state. The soul will be sometimes stout against any measure of that. "Crush me, to atoms if you will, but I will not yield." Rather should the sinner get quit of a delusion. It is a noble thing, is it not, in an earthly sovereign to be merciful? The earthly king is never more glorious in our eyes than when he does some great deed of mercy. And is it not felt, too, to be a noble thing when the criminal or offender, in loving penitence, gracefully and thankfully accepts the mercy? In such an acceptance he is not degraded, but exalted. And so let the sinner quit his sins, return to God, accept His mercy, not merely as though he cannot help it, as a heartrending necessity, but with loving and adoring gratitude; for what it is so glorious and blessed in God to give, it is blessed in him to receive. And look if there be any semblance of exultation over him in his abasement in the gracious Father's countenance. Nay, the very opposite. Can He have any thoughts of degrading him whom He would clasp in His arms and call His son?

The Mercy of God, viewed as saving men from evil thoughts and ways—which is the only true mercy—*is simply incredible*: so the prophet affirms, so we profess to think and to believe. But do we really believe it? Do we act as if we did? Millions will say to-day: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins"; but how many of that vast multitude, do you suppose, will both understand and realise what they say? Many of them hardly believe that they *have* sins which need a great act of Divine forgiveness. Many more do not know that, in order to forgive, God must punish their sins.

¶ One of James Lane Allen's later books has for its title the creed of its hero, *The Reign of Law.* That was all he could see in the universe: unpitying law; law irreversible and conscienceless. The world order was to him, and presumably to the author of the book, a heartless procession of events. There was no Face to meet his advances or to frown away his sin. But, as his heart began to break up under the suns and frosts of love; as the power of a new truth got hold of him, he looked up into heaven to whisper at length: "Ah, Gabrielle, it is love that makes a man believe in a God of love." Not that God is ever capricious, but that His heart can go forth in special overtures to His children; not that He ever really hides His face, but that it sometimes breaks like the conquering sun through our earth-mists; not that He ever ceases

to call, but that sometimes His voice has new resonance and music —this is our Christian faith.

2. But this leads us to the other point in the prophet's word: "He will abundantly pardon." There is nothing of cold, distant harshness in God's mercy-giving. He does not say, "Take thy pardon and go thy way. It is what thou dost not deserve. Thou hast been a wicked rebel; take care of thyself in time to come." God is ever like Himself. Behold Him in creation; in these myriads of mighty worlds He has hung above us in the heavens. How like the greatness of the Great One is that fulness of immensity. Behold Him in the gifts with which He blesses our earth; with what a lavish hand He scatters beauties and glories. And here, too, as the God of pardon, God again is like Himself; He pardons like Himself, with Divine generosity.

(1) *It is God's good pleasure to pardon abundantly.*

This man, whoever he was, has a claim to speak of God with an authority which few can rival. And *this* is what he has to say to us of God—that God's mercy is as much higher than our thoughts of it, as much broader, as much more pure and tender, as the heavens are higher and broader and sweeter than the earth; that it transcends all our conceptions of mercy, that it seems incredible to us only because it is so large and rich and free, that we can hardly even bring ourselves to believe in it. He affirms that even here our great poet's description holds good, that we may lift a reverent eye to the very Throne of Heaven and say: "Mercy is twice blessed," blessing "him that gives," as well as "him that takes," since God delights in mercy, and is—if we may speak of so great a mystery in words so homely —at least as pleased to forgive our sins as we are to have them forgiven.

(2) *Its abundance is due to His excellence.*

If we doubt whether He means to the full what He says—if we doubt whether He is in earnest in calling such as we are to come to Him, whether He can pardon as abundantly as man has sinned—here is the answer to our unbelief: He does not work by the rules and manners of men. His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. He shows His desire for

our salvation, and His readiness to accept us, in doing what none could have imagined possible, in sending His Son to take our nature upon Him, and to become man for our sakes. Here is the pledge of His faithfulness. Here is the assurance which none can doubt, that He loves the souls of men with the love with which He loves His only-begotten Son. When we will not come to Him, He comes to us. When we refuse to seek Him, He comes Himself to seek and to save us. He does not send, He does not call merely. He comes down from heaven, and lays aside His glory, and speaks to us face to face, with the words of man, with the fellow-feeling of man, with the affectionate love and tender earnestness of man. He who made the light, and rules beyond the stars, comes and calls on us, and speaks to us with the simple plainness with which a father speaks to his little children, or a little child appeals to grown men.

(3) *And especially to His greater knowledge.*

God is more forgiving than man; where the justice which only half knows the magnitude of the offence is often merciless, the justice which sees it in all its heinousness is ready to pardon; even where all hope of clemency from a mortal weak and erring as himself, is gone; to Him who knows no sin, who is absolutely inaccessible to temptation, may the forlorn and guilty soul repair with the assurance that its appeal for mercy will never be heard in vain. It is just because God's thoughts and ways are not as man's, because His righteousness is infinitely exalted above man's, that therefore the unrighteous man may "return unto the Lord" with the assurance that "He will have mercy upon him, and to our God" with the confidence that "He will abundantly pardon."

> My Lord, when Thou didst love me, didst Thou know
> How weak my efforts were, how few,
> Tepid to love and impotent to do,
> Envious to reap while slack to sow?
> —"Yea, I knew."[1]

(4) *It is expressed in His very Name.*

In the effort that was put forth by the prophets of old to

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

give the wings of words to the Divine Inspiration that stirred within them, and more particularly to give the divinest expression to their conception of the character of God, they hit upon nothing that is finer, or grander, or more instructive than the terms in which they represent the name of God. It must indeed be difficult to name God, if the name is to be adequately significant. Hence the accumulation of grand human terms in the name of the Lord as proclaimed to Moses of old:—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, *forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin*, and that will by no means clear the impenitent."

The penitent Levites, of whom we read in the Book of Nehemiah, thus spoke to God: "Thou art a *God of pardons*, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." God is characterised not only as a pardoning God, but as a "God of pardons." He is possessed, as it were, of such an inexhaustible store of pardons that the supply is sufficient to meet the most numerous necessities imaginable. If pardon be at all, there is no fear of stint in the supply, stint such as might leave some of us, against our will, out in the dark, out in the cold, out in the hurricane of storm and tempest. Whatever pardon may be in its essence and significance, there is assuredly enough of it and to spare, for all of us without distinction or exception, seeing God is *a God of pardons*.

¶ The inner sanctuary of the humble home is the "fireside." A lad in his teens, a member of a large family in Sheffield, left his home, and by persistent waywardness caused his parents considerable anxiety and pain. One night a young sister found him loitering in the locality. Her best effort could only bring him a little nearer the old home. A mother's glad welcome induced him to "come in." Taking off his coat he shamefacedly proceeded to a chair near the door when his father called out "Nay lad, don't sit theer; tha's coom back; hum reight up te t' fier."

My God, my God, have mercy on my sin,
For it is great; and if I should begin
To tell it all,
The day would be too small
To tell it in.

My God, Thou wilt have mercy on my sin
For Thy Love's sake: yea, if I should begin
To tell *This* all,
The day would be too small
To tell it in.[1]

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

THE HIGHEST IS THE MOST FORGIVING.

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The Highest is the Most Forgiving.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.—Iv. 8, 9.

In this chapter we have a great evangelical discourse on the Return from Exile, which is very grandly conceived. Israel was not going back to be as before, but to become the mistress and mother of nations. "Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God." And along with that enlarged political influence there was to be a new satisfaction of heart; in that deep hunger which cannot be appeased with bread, God's gift would bring them rest. The promise was well-nigh inconceivable, and it was not made easier by the lowliness of the condition, for what was to "ring in the full satisfaction" was nothing higher or more revolutionary than obedience; all the needed changes in the mind of statesmen and in the mood of the exiled people were suspended on that. "Hearken diligently unto me," saith God, "and ye shall eat that which is good," "hear and your soul shall live." Obedience, which, in the experience of every one has passed unrecognised a hundred times, was suddenly to work a transformation; and men, in listening, seemed to hear a fairy tale from worlds of other dimensions and powers than this, for things like that do not happen on the level of this arid and commonplace earth. To the exiles it sounded much as the preaching of the gospel sounds to some of ourselves, who do not doubt that satisfaction is a good thing, and whose heart runs out in desire for a little more worth the name; but in this sober world, where still the second best prevails, how can it be? In all our churches there are people who have settled it in their minds that, essentially, this

promise is not true, but belongs to the delusive phraseology of religion where word and thing do not keep pace.

1. The glory of the preaching of a noble religion is that it "bears our intellect, conscience, emotions, imagination out beyond this world," and enables us to realise another scheme of powers than our senses have discovered; and that is what the prophet here attempts. Where man's faith was hindered he thrusts in the bare assertion that God's thoughts and ways are not like ours. If things are really of the size and force which commonly are attributed to them there would be no room for a gospel to work; but then the world is built in God's way; it is a grander world than we yet have dreamed, with secrets of power yet unexplored. There are height and depth within it, and what we count impossible is possible with God.[1] "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways."

2. The consideration that God's nature is unlike to ours, that His thoughts are not as man's thoughts, His ways not as man's ways, is adduced, in the passage immediately before us, as a reason why a sinful being should have all the more hope for mercy at His hands. But there is a point of view from which we must hold the very opposite of this proposition to be the truth. Neither morality nor religion would be possible if, deeper than any dissimilarity, there were not a real and essential likeness between God's nature and ours. Morality is not obedience to an arbitrary authority, but sympathy with the principle or spirit of God's law. Religion is the communion of the soul with God, but betwixt beings absolutely unlike there could be no communion. It is just because God's nature is essentially one with ours—His that of the Father of spirits, ours that of spirits made in His own image, after His own likeness; it is because what we call thought, intelligence, mind, is in essence the same in God and in us—in Him the infinite thought or reason, in us that of beings to whom the inspiration of the Almighty hath given understanding; it is, finally, because when I say, "God is Love," I can ascribe to Him as that which constitutes the deepest essence of His nature that same feeling which binds human hearts together, and, as by a hidden yet all-powerful solvent, melts their separateness into unity;—in one word, it is because in the

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, p. 91.

profoundest sense of the words, God's thoughts *are* as our thoughts, and God's ways as our ways, that we can understand the revelation He has given of His will, and enter into that spiritual fellowship with Him in which true religion consists.[1]

Let us accordingly consider (1) the Likeness of God's Ways to ours, and (2) their Unlikeness.

I.

The Likeness of God's Thoughts and Ways to Ours.

1. If our thoughts were not in a measure like God's thoughts, we should know nothing about Him. If our thoughts were not like God's thoughts, we should have no standard for life or thinking. Righteousness and beauty and truth and goodness are the same things in heaven and earth, and alike in God and man. We are made after His image, poor creatures though we be; and though there must ever be a gulf of unlikeness, which we cannot bridge, between the thoughts of Him whose knowledge has no growth or uncertainty, whose wisdom is infinite and all whose nature is boundless light, and our knowledge, and must ever be a gulf between the workings and ways of Him who works without effort, and knows neither weariness nor limitation, and our work, so often foiled, so always toilsome, yet in all the unlikeness there is (and no man can denude himself of it) a likeness to the Father. For the image in which God made man at the beginning is not an image that it is in the power of man to cast away, and in the worst of his corruptions and the widest of his departures he still bears upon him the signs of likeness "to Him that created him." The coin is rusty, battered, defaced; but still legible are the head and the writing. "Whose image and superscription hath it?". Render unto God the things that are declared to be God's, because they bear His likeness and are stamped with His signature.

¶ The word "thought" would have no more meaning for me than the words "red" or "green" to a man born blind, if it were not that I have the key to it in the principle of thought or intelligence within me, and that when anything is asserted or denied of the thoughts of God, the proposition is intelligible only because it

[1] John Caird.

tacitly implies that thought in God is essentially the same with that which I call thought in me.[1]

2. All knowledge of Divine things begins in a sense of our kinship with God. It is impossible to gain any strong, soul-dominating impression of the Eternal unless we recognise that in the stupendous presence which fills heaven and earth, there is a centre of personal consciousness, not unlike that upon which the sense of our identity rests. God thinks His counsels, chooses His lines of action, loves, and also welcomes the love which is offered to Him, according to the self-same scheme upon which human nature is constituted, and its functions proceed.

This opening up of the mind of God to the mind of man, with the very assurance that, worms of the dust though we be, we are reading the thoughts and exploring the ways of the Creator, is at once the starting-point and the goal of all human knowledge, in the treasure of history, the consecration of science and philosophy, the inspiration of religion natural and revealed, so that whoever cuts off this intercourse between God and man, through the manifestation of His very mind and heart to us, involves all things in darkness, and covers us with the shadow of death.

¶ This is the method of the Old Testament, and Jesus also followed it. We see it in His parabolic teaching, which rests on the assumption that, as the Son of Sirach says, "all things are double one against another," and the spiritual world the counterpart of the natural, as Mrs. Browning says,

> Consummating its meaning, rounding all
> To justice and perfection, line by line,
> Form by form, nothing single nor alone,
> The great below clenched by the great above.

And we see it also in the name which He gave to God. He called Him "the heavenly Father," and I like to regard this as a reminiscence of His sweet and happy childhood in the house of the carpenter of Nazareth. The Evangelist describes Joseph as "a righteous man," and the term means rather, in Biblical phraseology, "a kindly man," as St. Chrysostom explains it, "kind and sweetly reasonable (χρηστὸς καὶ ἐπιεικής)." Jesus remembered gratefully the fatherly goodness which had sheltered and sustained His helpless

[1] John Caird.

childhood, and, searching the whole domain of human experience, He could discover no fitter emblem of the infinite goodness of God.[1]

3. With respect to the very matter of Divine *forgiveness* of which the text particularly treats, and which it seems to represent as altogether different from human forgiveness, the Bible is full of representations which seem to imply the very reverse. When it is declared that "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him"; when it is said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him"; when we are told to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"; and when our Lord sets forth as the type of that love and tenderness which, in our furthest aberrations from goodness, God bears to us, the love which no ingratitude has been able to exhaust, no depth of infamy to render hopeless of its object, the mingled sorrow and pity and joy of an earthly father over his prodigal yet penitent child—what have we in all this if not the assurance that we *may* know God by human analogies, that if we would learn what love and pity and forgiveness are in God's heart, we have only to look into our own; so that, even as regards that very characteristic of the Divine nature of which the text treats, there is a sense in which we must not deny, but assert, that God's thoughts are as our thoughts, and God's ways as our ways.

¶ I was told once of an old man in a Yorkshire village, whose son had been a sore grief to him. One day a neighbour inquired how the lad was doing. "Oh, very bad!" was the answer. "He's been drinking again, and behaving very rough." "Dear, dear!" said the neighbour. "If he was my son, I would turn him out." "Yes," returned the father, "and so would I, if he was yours. But, you see, he's not your's; he's mine."[2]

¶ Think of the parable of the Prodigal Son, or that great saying of His, that triumphant argument *a fortiori*: "What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matt. vii. 9–11). The

[1] D. Smith in *Religion and the Modern World*, p. 188. [2] *Ibid.* p. 189.

postulate here and everywhere in our Lord's teaching is the kinship between God and man and the consequent reasonableness of interpreting the Divine by the human. As Browning has it:

> Take all in a word: the truth in God's breast
> Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:
> Though He is so bright and we so dim,
> We are made in His image to witness Him.

II.

The Unlikeness of God's Thoughts and Ways to Ours.

We have not gone far in our search for God before we feel the check-rein and are constrained to admit that, whilst there are points of contact between His being and ours, there are also points of enormous dissimilarity. We have worked from the scale of the dwarf, and the larger mensuration is beyond us. There is a basis for common fellowship in the elemental truths which arise from these methods of comparison: but we must not make God according to a petty, mundane ground-plan and transfer the limitations of human life and character to His incomparable person and government.

1. God's ways and thoughts are unlike ours in *their superhuman perfection.* The whole Bible is but an expansion of one sentence, one utterance of the Eternal, "I am Jehovah." Hence the revelation must be incomplete; for who could fully reveal Himself to His creatures would be no God; and it must also be astonishing and amazing; for a professed record of any part of God's thoughts and ways that did not land in mystery and tend to wonder would be self-condemned, and proved to be neither true nor Divine. It is not only here and there that God's thoughts and ways are superhuman, but throughout, just as a circle is everywhere a circle, and nowhere a square, or capable of being reduced to the latter figure. How man can at all lay hold of God, or, with his infinite and infinitely inferior mental faculties, frame any conception of Him, this is the wonder and has sometimes been the stumbling-block of philosophy; and it is only removed out of the way by devoutly and thankfully accepting the

fact that we do know Him (though darkly), and are so far made in His image, that there may be and ought to be reverential contact and communion with Him.

God's method of teaching us would not be by a revelation if the finite could adjust itself at once to the infinite mind. In a revelation we have presented to us some of the unassimilated disparities between God's thoughts and ways and those of His creature man. Without realising it we verge upon the impiety of assuming that God has nothing to teach us, and that we may have something to teach Him. You do not hope to master Newton's *Principia* with as much ease as you grasp snippets of toothsome frivolities in the columns of the daily press. You ought not to think the Most High as easy to understand as a plain, plodding, transparent neighbour. Is it seemly to expect that the Mighty God will adopt our methods and put Himself into step for all time with the dwarfs of earth? This gross, phenomenal self-complacency, this thrice-assured infallibility, proof against all doubt of itself, is an offence. God does sometimes bow the heavens and strangely condescend to our infirmity, but it would be a poor kindness to us if He were to make those infirmities, rather than His own higher thoughts and surpassing ways, the limit of His self-revelations and the bounds of our destiny. We are not slowly evolving ourselves into the knowledge of God, but God is meeting us with a vast body of truth concerning His being and His providential ways, the vaster part of which yet remains to be touched and assimilated.

¶ Our nature may be like God's, but it is not the measure of God's. Even one human being is often a mystery to another. The words and actions of one who is far in advance of us in wisdom and goodness are often unintelligible to us. It is the penalty of greatness to lose the sympathy of meaner men. A great man is indeed the exponent of the truest spirit of humanity, but for that very reason he is often misunderstood by the men among whom he lives. His motives are purer, his aims nobler, his actions determined by wider principles, his whole career in life regulated by ideas more far-reaching and comprehensive than those of ordinary men. And so, just for this very reason that he is truer to the perfect ideal of humanity than they, it may be said that His thoughts are not as their thoughts, nor His ways as their ways. Much more, obviously, must this be said of Him whose image and goodness are infinite. Man is made in the image of God, but God

is not the reflection of imperfect man. There is much in us and in all our thoughts and ways which we cannot transfer to Him, and if we attempt to do so, we only ascribe to the object of worship, as has often been done, our human weakness and errors, sometimes even our follies and crimes.[1]

2. They are unlike in *their comprehensiveness.* It is a wonderful and beautiful turn which the prophet here gives to the thought of the transcendent elevation of God. The heavens are the very type of the unattainable; and to say that they are "higher than the earth" seems, at first sight, to be but to say, "No man hath ascended into the heavens," and you sinful men must grovel here down upon your plain, whilst they are far above, out of your reach. But the heavens bend. They are an arch, and not a straight line. They touch the horizon; and there come down from them the sweet influences of sunshine and rain, of dew and of blessing, which bring fertility. So they are not only far and unattainable, but friendly and beneficent, and communicative of good. Like them, in true analogy but yet infinite superiority to the best and noblest in man, is the boundless mercy of our pardoning God:—

> The glorious sky, embracing all,
> Is like its Maker's love,
> Wherewith encompassed, great and small
> In peace and order move.

¶ The lesson is one of humility, but also of consolation; for the depths of God's mind are depths of truth, of wisdom, and of love; and therefore we may be not only cast down, but also lifted up as we study in this lofty chapter these great words: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."[2]

3. They are unlike in their *moral and intellectual estimates.* Can we estimate the moral difference between the human and the Divine? God spends the incomputable term of His eternal Being in ministries of unwearied grace,—upholding the weak,

[1] John Caird. [2] J. Cairns.

doing good to all, setting forth in mighty deeds His truth and righteousness, so proving within Himself that "it is more blessed to give than to receive"; whilst we, though outwardly blameless, have spent much of our time in gathering for self-enrichment, taking toll of our neighbours, asserting our place in the world, bringing others into captivity to our will. And, compressed as we are into moral dwarfishness by the traditions of an imperfect society, we think a selfish scheme of life quite defensible. The Divine nature, like a fountain, is ever pouring itself forth in benediction, without taint of self or stain of darkness; whilst human nature is a turgid, devouring whirlpool, sucking down into its depths whatever may chance to drift within its range. When we think and act, we are weighted by the incubus of past aggressiveness and dishonour; but when God thinks and acts, His character of age-long goodness uplifts all His ideals beyond the uttermost heights.

¶ How vast is the difference even among men in this respect. The ideas of James Chalmers, the apostle of New Guinea, and of the cannibals who clubbed and ate him, were not made of the same stuff. General Gordon and the Arab slave-raiders, whose power he set himself to break up, thought in divergent grooves and represented antagonistic schemes. The philanthropist who founds a Garden City and the pitiless Shylock who rackrents a slum have antithetic views of life because of the contrasted types of character which give impact to their notions. The passions cooped up in our close criminal communities do not produce rare art, seraphic music, supreme literature. The dreams flitting through Pentonville, Dartmoor, or Broadmoor brains, and the dreams cherished in a Peace Congress, would make books for different sections if written down and presented to a library.[1]

¶ In the early years of the last century Walter Scott, poet and novelist, took a voyage round the north and west coasts of Scotland in company with Stevenson, the lighthouse constructor. Scott went for pleasure, and wherever they landed spent his time in visiting ruined castles, talking with the old gossips of the hamlets and picking up local traditions, which he afterwards wove into his fascinating stories. Stevenson was sent out by Trinity House to survey the coast, mark out dangerous reefs, and choose the best sites for lighthouses. Scott landed when the weather was fair and the sea smooth. His friend faced the gales in open boats, visited jagged rocks over which the surf boiled,

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Strenuous Gospel*, p. 12.

and braved countless dangers, because he was commissioned to find out where warning beacons must be fixed and lighthouses placed, and how in the coming generations imperilled lives could be saved. When the storm outside shakes doors and windows we sit by the fireside deriving pleasure from the wizard's books; but the seaman battling with the waves finds salvation through the thought and work of the romance writer's comrade. The two men were the best of friends, and as they met day by day had many interests in common. But their thoughts ran in different directions because the one had no responsibilities and was catering for the tastes of his admiring readers, whilst the other bore upon his soul a great burden of human life. Their paths diverged, for their duties varied and their minds were acting in different grooves. God thinks with the burdens of a doomed race resting upon His soul of love, and acts to ransom them from the power of destruction. His thoughts and ways are beyond ours, even as the heavens are higher than the earth.[1]

4. More particularly God's thoughts and ways are unlike ours in *their estimate of sin.*

1. God knows us more thoroughly than any human being can. The estimate which a human censor forms of us is not based on any immediate knowledge, but is an inference from our outward conduct and bearing. But this estimate may easily be an erroneous one, inasmuch as our actions may only partially betray us, may in many ways be an inadequate or deceptive expression of character. Would any of us like that a human eye should read our thoughts and feelings, draw back the curtain of reserve, of conventional propriety, of decorous looks and regulated speech, and see our undisguised selves for a single day? Would there be nothing to abate the observer's good opinion of us, nothing revealed which neither our words nor deeds nor outward aspect betrays? We do not need to speak of concealed sins or crimes, the facts of which are unknown to the world, and which, if they were known would brand our name with dishonour and infamy; for in so far as these things are concealed, it is obviously nothing in the nature of human actions themselves but only in the accident of their being unobserved or undetected, that makes a man seem in the eyes of men better than he is, and gains him exemption from shame and censure.

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Strenuous Gospel*, p. 15.

But what needs more reflection is that from the very nature of the thing there is much in a man's outward character and spirit that never comes above-board, or only partially and fitfully, and which cannot form an element in the judgment of those who measure us only by overt acts. There is an inner life which no mortal eye sees, a great hidden element of character seething beneath the surface, which only the occasional outflash or unexpected outbreak betrays. There are, for instance, lurking in many a man's nature evil tendencies which lack of opportunity has kept latent. The unregulated appetite, the secret lust, the cowardice, covetousness, or malignity, the frail virtue which, if but the hour of opportunity came, would present but a feeble front to temptation, may be there within the man's breast; but the conditions that would convert inclination into action have been lacking, and like the latent disease that has not become active, or the subterranean fire-damp which the flame has never reached, it lies harmless and hidden from observation.

If there be an inspection which is intercepted by no softening veil, before which all disguise and ambiguity are gone, which sees us through and through; if there be a moral estimate which takes into account all that men are and have been and done—secrets which perhaps have never been told, burdens of guilt that have been borne for years in silent anguish, smouldering tendencies to vice, unhallowed passions straining against the leash of self-control and social propriety, every rude, bad thought, every impure imagination, every meanness and weakness, every act of cowardly silence or sham disinterestedness—if, I say, there be a moral Judge before the broad, unshaded, piercing light of whose inspection all that we are is thus laid bare; and if betwixt him and a fellow man a sin-stained soul had its choice who should be its judge, by whose decision its fate should be determined, might we not deem it impossible to hesitate for a moment? "I can bear," might he not well say, "man's inspection, but not God's; before the tribunal of a mortal there is room for hope, but what hope or help can there be for a guilty soul at the bar of the Omniscient? Let me fall into the hands of man and not into the hands of God, for His thoughts are not as man's thoughts, nor His ways as man's ways."

And yet it is just because God's thoughts and ways are not

as man's, because His righteousness is infinitely exalted above man's that therefore the unrighteous may "return unto the Lord" with the assurance that "He will have mercy upon him, and to our God" with the confidence that "He will abundantly pardon."[1]

¶ Undoubtedly a man naturally knows that sin is an evil, and without this knowledge, indeed, he would be incapable of committing sin, since in any action a man is guilty only of the evil which his conscience apprehends. But this natural perception of sin is more or less confused and indistinct. Our Saviour on the Cross prayed for His murderers in these words: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He did not mean that they were ignorant that they were doing wrong, for then they could have needed no forgiveness, but that they did not realise the full atrocity of the deed. They were acting guiltily indeed, but inadvertently and blindly. And the same may be said of very many sinners. Sin is for the most part a leap in the dark. A man knows he is doing a dangerous thing, but he does not realise the full danger. He does not take in the full scope of his action, nor its complete consequences. St. Paul speaks of the deceitfulness of sin, and the expression describes very well the source of that disappointment and unhappiness which often overtakes the transgressor, when he finds himself involved in difficulties from which it is all but impossible to extricate himself, and sorrows which he never anticipated. It is the old story. Sin "beginneth pleasantly, but in the end it will bite like a snake and will spread abroad poison like a serpent."

2. God is more angry than we are. In God there is an immitigable abhorrence and hatred of evil, to which, in our keenest moments of aggrieved sensibility, we only faintly approximate. The easy, good-natured divinity who makes everything comfortable is not the God of the Bible. There He has a frowning as well as a smiling face, an aspect, not of feeble benignity, but of terror and wrath and relentless hostility to evil and evil doers. If mercy mean foregoing just indignation and letting off from punishment, then there is no mercy in God. He is the most merciless, relentless, inexorable of all beings. If sin and misery were disconnected, if in all the universe one selfish soul could ever escape wretchedness and live on at peace, it would be a universe over which God had ceased to rule. Wherever a

[1] John Caird.

sinful soul exists in all time and space, there, sooner or later, in its loneliness and anguish, as of a worm that dieth not and a fire that is not quenched, there is the proof that the justice of God demands, and will not abate aught of its terrible satisfaction.

Frankly we have to recognise that there are two ways of it, two measurings of the value of things, two views of life; and, soon or late, we must make our choice of this or that. The common temptation is to shirk the choice. Within the Church of Jesus are multitudes of entirely worldly people, whose standard and aim are of this world. They live themselves, and they teach their children to live, under the domination of the ideas of society, and yet they never doubt that they are good Christians. If we believe Christ, that cannot be; the man who heard but did not do seemed to Him like a man building a house without a foundation, which topples about him. We learn in life that there is a religion which is not Christ's religion. In our churches there is a veiled paganism, hard, scornful, unforgiving, fashion-ridden, and the mischief of it lies not in what these people do so much as in what they think; and in returning to God the first necessity is that they forsake their thoughts.

There is nothing more false and immoral than the weak, sentimental tenderness with which crime and criminals are sometimes regarded. It is a spurious benignity that always recoils from severity, shrinks from the sight of pain, and would treat vice and crime as a thing to be wept over with effusive sensibility and not to be sternly condemned and punished. The hysteric cry for remission of a criminal's sentence that occasionally bursts forth from foolish women and still more foolish men, has in it nothing of the spirit of true Christian charity.

¶ Béranger speaks of "the God of good-natured folk," a God not unreasonably strict, who can, on occasion, be blind to human slips; and in Christian churches many prayers are addressed to that "Dieu des bons gens." The trouble is that, when penalty begins to press, these people have no faith to help them. A God who does not make too much of little sins they can understand, but a God who forgives, when the sin is very great, passes all their comprehension; and when the evil days come they are left without a hope.[1]

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, p. 93.

5. But the purpose of the prophet in telling us that God's thoughts and God's ways are higher than ours is that He may give us to understand *His readiness to forgive.* We may turn the words about in many ways and put meanings into them, but what was first in the prophet's intention was to assert that God forgives, as He does all else, on a large scale.

The "for" at the beginning of each clause points us back to the previous statement, and both of the verses of our text are in different ways its foundation. And what has preceded is this: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." That is why the prophet dilates upon the difference between the "thoughts" and the "ways" of God and men.

We may not say that God forgives just as man forgives, that mercy goes forth from Him towards the offender in the same measure and for the same reasons as mercy from man to his offending brother. It is possible for man to be cruel when God is kind, and to be weakly lenient where God is stern. There are occasions when the culprit might hope for escape were men alone his judge; there are occasions when, shrinking from the merciless censure of human judges, the sinful soul might well cry out, "Let me now fall into the hand of the Lord; for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man."

(1) In the first place, it may be observed that, contrary to what might be supposed, it is not in point of fact, even amongst men, the best and purest who are found to be the severest censors and judges of others.

> Thy mercy greater is than any sin,
> Thy greatness none can comprehend:
> Wherefore, O Lord, let me Thy mercy win,
> Whose glorious name no time can ever end:
> Wherefore I say all praise belongs to Thee,
> Whom I beseech be merciful to me.[1]

And if, thus, human goodness is the more merciful in proportion as it approaches nearer to perfection, if amongst the highest, heavenliest spirituality is the most tolerant, the last to

[1] William Byrd, *Psalms, Sonnets, and Songs.*

let go the fallen or to lose its faith in human goodness, and the possibility for the worst of better things,—might we not conclude that when goodness becomes absolutely perfect, just then will mercy reach its climax and become absolutely unlimited?

2. Again, in proof of the assertion that God's nature, in so far as it differs from man's, makes Him more and not less likely to forgive, consider that in God there is not, and cannot be, any personal irascibility or resentment; He can never regard a sinful soul with any feeling of vindictiveness, any desire to extract from His sufferings reparation for wrong. There are certain defective theological notions according to which the relations of sinful man to God have been represented as turning on the principle of what is called "vindictive justice," and the so-called "scheme of redemption" as based on the necessity of extracting from suffering, reparation for wrong. Now, there may be a true notion which men try thus to express, but the form in which they express it is erroneous and unworthy. In God, and therefore in that moral order of the world which is the expression of His nature, there is no vindictiveness, no personal resentment; and it is the utter absence of this in His nature that makes Him infinitely more forgiving than men, even the best of men, are.

¶ Conceive for a moment what a change would take place in our relations to those who offend or injure us, how far it would go to the removal of everything that hinders forgiveness, if we could eliminate from our feelings every vestige of what is due to personal irritation or resentment. Conceive a man looking on all insults, wrongs, offences, with absolute, passionless indifference as regards his own personality, and contemplating them only with the pain and grief due to their moral culpability. Suppose, further, that, with a mind thus no longer agitated by personal feeling, no longer biassed by wounded self-love, he could see in the wrong or injury an evil inflicted on the wronger's own nature far greater than any inflicted on himself, the exhibition of a morally diseased spiritual state so deplorable as to swallow up every other emotion than that of profoundest sorrow and pity for his wretchedness: and so, that instead of retaliating or inflicting fresh evil upon him, or never resting till the offence should be worked out in his misery, there should arise in the injured man's breast an intense longing to cure the diseased spirit, to save him from himself and win him back to goodness—conceive such a

state of mind, and though, as we depict it, it seems to imply a magnanimity and self-forgetfulness almost impossible in a being of flesh and blood, yet is it an exact representation of the heart and life of Him who was God manifest in the flesh, and therefore of the relation of God to all sinful and guilty men.

For what is the life of Christ on earth but a long, silent, immovable patience; an absolute, life-long superiority to personal feeling; a sorely-tried yet unshaken calm and freedom of spirit amidst insults and wrongs. He could feel, He could grieve, He was not incapable of anger, but where in the record of His life shall we find *Him* betrayed into one whisper of resentful or vindictive feeling for the ills He suffered at the hands of men? He moved through life exposed to almost ceaseless hostility, subjected to almost every form of injury that human hatred and cruelty could inflict—to scorn, contumely, misrepresentation of motives, treachery, ingratitude, desertion; He was subjected to foul personal indignities, disowned and deserted by the friends He most trusted, and, in His sore need, betrayed by one of them to His enemies. The tenderest, kindest, most loving Spirit that ever breathed, He lived rejected and despised of men, and He died amidst the cries and taunts of an infuriated mob. There were moments when His personal followers, amazed at His forbearance, would have unsheathed the sword in His defence, or called down heaven's artillery on His persecutors. And yet never, from first to last, can we find in His history one slightest sign of personal irritation, one transient flash of exasperated sensibility, or cry for redress of His cruel wrongs. All other feeling in His breast was swallowed up in an infinite pity and sorrow for those at whose hands He suffered. He lived their unwearied benefactor, and He died invoking, amidst the paroxysms of His agony, heaven's mercy on His murderers. And in all this He was to us the manifestation of that Being into whose nature personal irascibility can never enter, who has no personality apart from goodness—the incarnate image of that God who is long-suffering and slow to wrath, abundant in goodness and mercy, and who, exalted in the infinitude of His goodness far above the agitation of man's resentful passions, declares that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His thoughts above our thoughts, and His ways above our ways, and that if the wicked will forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, He will have mercy upon him, and will abundantly pardon him.[1]

1. Now let us look at some of the ways in which we may

[1] John Caird.

see that God's pardon outreaches the thoughts and the ways of men. And, first of all, let us consider *the character of the sin which had to be forgiven.* Man does not forgive where he has been insulted as God was in his rebellion. Nations do not tolerate blows aimed at their independence and their very existence; and therefore man's revolt might have been expected to draw down swift and remediless destruction. We justly exalt the Fatherhood of God; but this great and glorious truth must be harmonised with the rest of God's character, and with the conditions of the moral universe over which He presides. Sin in its very essence is a wilful attempt to dethrone, degrade, and even destroy God; and even the relation of fatherhood, with its duties to other children, may warrant and even necessitate the penal separation of the child or children, who would conspire to act out in the family, what sin is in the universe. That God's thoughts should have been thoughts of peace, in such a crisis to a sinning world, is the wonder of unfallen beings and of those who are recovered. They cannot go back to that "counsel of peace," in which, though every foreseen trespass demanded the exercise of justice, mercy yet rejoiced against judgment, without exclaiming: "This is not the manner of man, O Lord God." "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done;
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sins their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallowed in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done;
For I have more."[1]

2. *The conditions imposed.*—The sole and simple condition is repentance—that is to say, repentance which is renunciation. Is

[1] John Donne.

there anything in God which, if I now repent and turn with my whole heart to Him, bars the way to forgiveness, makes Him insist first on the satisfaction to His offended law which misery and suffering bring? Be my past life what it may—wasted, mis-spent, stained with the indelible traces of selfish and evil deeds—if now I break away from the past, hate it, renounce it, and in sincerest sorrow and penitence turn to offer up my soul, my life, my whole being to God, will He say: "No, till vengeance for the past have its due, till the demand of my law for penal suffering be satisfied, mercy is impossible, I cannot forgive?"

Is not such a thought a travesty of the nature of God, a misconception of what He, the All-good, All-loving, must regard as the sacrifice for sin that is best and truest? For what must be that sacrifice or satisfaction that is dearest to Righteousness or to the Infinite Righteous One? The misery of lost souls, the pain, the sorrow and dismay of their moral desolation, that knows no mitigation, and the smoke of a torment that rises up for ever? Oh no, offer that to Molech, but not to the God whom Christ has revealed. But the tear of penitence, the prayer of faith, the sighs of a contrite spirit, the love and hope that will not let go its hold on God, the confiding trust that from the depths of despair sends forth the cry, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee"; the yearning after a purer, better life, that finds utterance in the prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me"—yes, I make answer, that is the sacrifice dearest to Him who despiseth not the sighing of a broken and contrite spirit, who hath said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and whose gospel, proclaimed by the lips and sealed by the sacrifice and death of His dear Son, is but a glorious renewal of the ancient promise, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

¶ He discoursed with me very fervently and with great openness of heart, concerning his manner of *going to* God, whereof some part is related already. He told me, that all consists *in*

one hearty renunciation of everything which we are sensible does not lead us to God, in order that we may accustom ourselves to a continual conversation with Him, without mystery and in simplicity.[1]

3. *The measure of the forgiveness.*—Nothing of which we have any experience in ourselves or in others is more than as a drop to the ocean compared with the absolute fulness and perfect freeness and unwearied frequency of His forgiveness. "He will abundantly pardon." He will multiply pardon. "With him there is plenteous redemption." We think we have stretched the elasticity of long-suffering and forgiveness further than we might have been reasonably expected to do if seven times we forgive the erring brother, but God's measure of pardon is seventy times seven, two perfectnesses multiplied into themselves perfectly; for the measure of His forgiveness is boundless, and there is no searching of the depths of His pardoning mercy. You cannot weary Him out; you cannot exhaust it. It is full at the end as at the beginning; and after all its gifts still it remains true, "With him is the multiplying of redemption."

The fault of all our human theories about forgiveness is that, in the process of explaining, we seem to narrow it; and thus we turn back to words which are better than human, as they come from Christ Himself, when He speaks of the father, who saw his son a great way off, and ran and fell on his neck. In that there is a grand theological artlessness; it seems to say that God forgives, not because a man is sorry, or because some condition or other is satisfied, but at the bottom of all, because, in His heart, He wants His son back again. And in three successive parables Jesus declared that God knows the human joy of finding things. "He will *abundantly* pardon."

We scarcely know what forgiveness is on earth. Even after a reconciliation relations remain clouded. Men may not quarrel, but something of the grudge remains; and if they forgive it is for once or twice, for few have patience to go with Peter to the seventh time, and then the heart, with all its gathered rancour, gets its way. Forgiveness is a hard thing, hard to bestow and hard to receive, as most of us have found; and so long as we

[1] Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, p. 19.

think of God in the light of that human experience, it must be with reluctance. But His ways are not as ours; when He pardons He pardons out and out, and He does not remember our sins.[1]

We have just as much right to draw God's natural attributes to the scale of the monad as to draw His moral attributes to the scale of a man. If God forgives at all, He will do it with God-like freedom and grandeur. If He permits us to crawl across His threshold, He will not merely tolerate our return, but welcome us with music and priceless gifts. Alas! alas! we put into the matchless mind which delights in mercy poor Simon Peter's thought of a forgiveness stretched and strained to seven times, whilst all the time His mercy outsoars and outspeeds ours, as the path of a sun outsoars the track of a glow-worm in the ditch. His thoughts are not bound by our petty precedents of limitation.

¶ When Dr. Moffat began his labours in Africa, one of his earliest converts was a chief called Africaner. This Africaner was the terror of the colony. He had the ferocity of a desperado, and wherever his name was pronounced, it carried dismay. When Africaner was brought to the knowledge of the truth, it seemed such a great thing that it was described by those who knew him, as the eighth wonder of the world. But God is doing such work every day. Christ is charged to save to the uttermost. He does not improve, but renew. The stupendous thing is giving life to the dead.[2]

4. *The method of it.*—How utterly unlike to any means of man's devising are those which God has chosen for the recovery of His lost creatures to His favour and His image! That God's Son should become incarnate and die on the cross for the world's redemption; that God's Spirit should descend into the guilty and polluted hearts of sinners, and work out there a blessed transformation; and that all this should be effected by the free and sovereign grace of God Himself, and laid open to the very chief of sinners, as the unconditional gift of His love, this, as universal experience attests, is something so far from having entered into the heart of man, that it needs incessant

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, p. 95.
[2] A. Philip, *The Father's Hand*, p. 182.

effort to keep it before him, even after it has been once revealed.

The world had four thousand years to learn the lesson. God had made the outline of it known to His Church from the beginning. He had raised up a special people to be the depositaries of the revelation; and He had taught them by priests and prophets, by types and signs without number. And yet when redemption came, how few received it, how few understood it; so that when the Saviour was actually hanging on the Cross, and finishing the work given Him to do, it is questionable, if so much as one, even of His own disciples, comprehended the design, or saw the glory of His sacrifice.

We cannot believe God gave His only begotten Son for the spiritual healing and salvation of His enemies, since such an act would be impossible to us. No hero of whom we have read or heard is equal to a like sacrifice. It defies probabilities. Is not this a sign that the Gospel, and the message within it, was thought out in a mind transcending ours, and the way of the Cross was a way suggested by no analogies of history.

All religion has been pressed with this problem, how to harmonise the perfect rectitude of the Divine nature and the solemn claims of law with forgiveness. All religions have borne witness to the fact that men are dimly aware of the discord and dissonance between themselves and the Divine thoughts and ways; and a thousand altars proclaim to us how they have felt that something must be done in order that forgiveness might be possible to an all righteous and Sovereign Judge. The Jew knew that God was a pardoning God, but to him that fact stood as needing much explanation and much light to be thrown upon its relations with the solemn law under which he lived. We have Jesus Christ. The mystery of forgiveness is solved, in so far as it is capable of solution, in Him and in Him alone. His death somewhat explains how God is just and the justifier of him that believeth. High above men's thoughts this great central mystery of the Gospel rises, that with God there is forgiveness and with God there is perfect righteousness.

When my thoughts about life are put away that I may get God's thoughts, Christ becomes the gift of God's heart to me, a Deliverer in whom the power of my new life consists, an

Enlightener from whom I learn to think of God and man. "If any man be in Christ," says Paul, "he is a new creature: old things have passed away, behold they have become new." His former judgments, his estimate of great and small are changed; he finds himself in a new washen earth. It is no power of earth that can work a change like that, but the redeeming will of God, who is able also to subdue all things unto Himself.[1]

Enough, my muse, of earthly things,
And inspirations but of wind;
Take up thy lute, and to it bind
Loud and everlasting strings,
And on them play, and to them sing,
The happy mournful stories,
The lamentable glories
Of the great crucified King!
Mountainous heap of wonders! which dost rise
Till earth thou joinest with the skies!
Too large at bottom, and at top too high,
To be half seen by mortal eye;
How shall I grasp this boundless thing?
What shall I play? What shall I sing?
I'll sing the mighty riddle of mysterious love,
Which neither wretched man below, nor blessed spirits above,
With all their comments can explain,
How all the whole world's life to die did not disdain![2]

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, p. 100.
[2] Abraham Cowley.

God's Double Dwelling-Place.

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God's Double Dwelling-Place.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.—lvii. 15.

Everything depends upon our conception of God. All our ideas are influential, but the most influential of all ideas is a man's idea of God. The wealth or poverty of our character is consequent upon how we conceive the character of God. Does our conception of God ever affect us as though we were gazing upon some awful peaks or looking down into some terrific abyss? Does the contemplation ever take our breath away? Do we ever look in awed quietness? "When I saw him I fell at his feet as one dead." And the wonder of it is that these words come from the lips of John the Beloved, from the one who had leaned on the Master's breast at supper.

¶ The Master of Balliol, Dr. Jowett, was once addressed by a lady who believed him to be somewhat liberal and vague in his views of religion; she said, "Sir, can you tell us what you really think about God?" The answer was: "Madam, it matters very little what I think about God, but it matters a great deal what God thinks about me." Yet beneath that assertion there was another which you can distinguish at once, namely: It matters very much what I think God thinks of me. It is essential that I should have right views of that Divine nature which is every hour appealing to mine, the one unescapable reality of my life without which one can neither think, nor speak, nor act. Every man must positively or negatively define his attitude to God.[1]

Now all through the ministry of Isaiah the prophet is confronted with a mean and impoverished conception of God. And to this impoverishment he traces the national degradation. The popular conception was weak and effeminate, and that in two

[1] R. J. Campbell, *City Temple Sermons*, p. 200.

ways. First, it fatally limited the Lord's presence. He was here, but not there. The boundary of their country marked the outskirts of His dominion. There is no more pathetic cry arises from the realms of the exile than the cry which implies that God is far away. They have left Him behind in the homeland! When they lost their home they lost their heaven! And then, in the second place, the conception was not only belittled, but debased. They conceived of God as rejoicing in their gifts even though they were offered with dirty hands. If only they brought Him an offering He would wink at their uncleanness. They regarded Him as one who could be appeased by carnal sacrifice.

It is this debased conception of God that the prophet sets himself to remove. "God is the high and lofty One and His name is Holy." But in removing it he does not fall into the opposite mistake of representing God as a Being with whom in His majesty and His holiness they can have no intercourse. He is high and holy and unchangeable, and at the same time He dwells with the humble and contrite. The thought of the verse, says Skinner, is very striking. It is the paradox of religion that Jehovah's holiness which places Him at an infinite distance from human pride and greatness, brings Him near to the humble in spirit. No contrast is indicated: Jehovah dwells on high *and* (not *but yet*) with the lowly.

The subject is the Double Dwelling-Place of God. That we may understand that it is two and yet one, the prophet describes God as both lofty and lowly. Thus we should consider:—

I. God's Highness.
II. God's Humbleness.
III. God's Double Dwelling-Place.

I.

God's Highness.

How impossible to speak worthily of God! of Him who fills the universe with His glory! A little while ago a great painter went out to paint the sunset. He prepared his palette, but the sight was so beautiful that he waited to examine it better. All about the skies and hills were rich shadows, resplendent colours,

purple flames, golden lustres. The painter waited, waited, absorbed by the vision of glory. Said his friend, impatiently, "Are you not going to begin?" "By and by," replied the artist. And so he waited, paralysed by the splendour, until the sun was set and dark shadows fell upon the mountains. Then he shut up his paint-box and returned home. But if we faint thus in the presence of God's lower works, how impossible is it to speak adequately of Him whom no man hath seen or can see. Yet it is well sometimes to recall the grandeur of God. Let us shun familiarities and sentimentalisms, and live in wonder and reverence.

1. His Spaciousness.

He stands above nature, law, necessity, fate, power, destiny, and all other such names as men have been pleased to give to the world, its laws, and its forces. He stands above humanity; dominating us, whatever may be our power, pride, or wrath. He stands above the unknown world, and its principalities. "God over all."

It is difficult to say which conception carries with it the greatest exaltation—that of boundless space or that of unbounded time. When we pass from the tame and narrow scenery of our own country, and stand on those spots of earth in which nature puts on her wilder and more awful forms, we are conscious of something of the grandeur which belongs to the thought of space. Go where the strong foundations of the earth lie around you in their massive majesty, and mountain after mountain rears its snow to heaven in a giant chain, and then, when this bursts upon you for the first time in life, there is that peculiar feeling which we call, in common language, an enlargement of ideas. But when we are told that the sublimity of these dizzy heights is but a nameless speck in comparison with the globe of which they form the girdle; and when we pass on to think of that globe itself as a minute spot in the mighty system to which it belongs, so that our world might be annihilated, and its loss would not be felt; and when we are told that eighty millions of such systems roll in the world of space, to which our own system again is as nothing; and when we are again pressed with the recollection that beyond those farthest limits created

power is exerted immeasurably farther than eye can reach, or thought can penetrate: then, brethren, the awe which comes upon the heart is only, after all, a tribute to a *portion* of God's greatness.

Greatness can be known only by greatness; wisdom can be seized and interpreted only by wisdom; purity alone can honour the perfection and uplift the praises of infinite and absolute sanctity. The full-orbed splendour of the Most High can never be known outside the limits of the high and holy place. It is true "heaven and earth are full of his glory," but earth redolent with the incense of the sweetest springtides, dainty with the flowers that bloom only in the steps of the King, overarched with those glowing canopies of cloud His own skill spreads forth, consecrated by the most overwhelming theophanies He has ever vouchsafed to mortals, earth is but "His footstool" whilst heaven is "His throne." "I dwell in the high and holy place."

¶ There are but few stars more interesting and beautiful than Vega (a first-magnitude star in the constellation hydra). To its own intrinsic interest must now be added that arising from the fact that each successive night we look upon it we have swept more than 1,000,000 miles nearer to its brilliant globe, and that with every year we have lessened, by some 400,000,000 miles, the distance that divides us from it. There can surely be no thought more amazing than this! It seems to gather up and bring to a focus all other impressions of the vastness of celestial distances and periods. So swift and ceaseless a motion, and yet the gulfs that sever us from our neighbours in space are so huge that a millennium of such inconceivable travelling makes no perceptible change upon the face of the heavens![1]

2. His Timelessness.

There are some subjects on which it would be good to dwell, if it were only for the sake of that enlargement of mind which is produced by their contemplation. And eternity is one of these, so that you cannot steadily fix the thoughts upon it without being sensible of a peculiar kind of elevation, at the same time that you are humbled by a personal feeling of utter insignificance. You have come in contact with something so immeasurable—beyond the narrow range of our common specula-

[1] J. Baikie, *Through the Telescope*, p. 271.

tions—that you are exalted by the very conception of it. Now the only way we have of forming any idea of eternity is by going, step by step, up to the largest measures of time we know of, and so ascending, on and on, till we are lost in wonder. We cannot grasp eternity, but we can learn something of it by perceiving that, rise to what portion of time we will, eternity is vaster than the vastest.

¶ The late Mr. Proctor said that the planets were like a group of human beings in different stages of growth and development. Some of them were probably in their babyhood, and not yet ripe for the life-bearing destinies that might probably be before them. And other of the planets had already passed through babyhood, youth, and maturity, and had entered upon a useless and decrepit old age. They were barren, played-out, infertile, and had been so for hundreds of thousands, if not millions of years. And the planetary system is one of myriads of similar systems, some of which may have been contemporaneous, and some of which may have existed in succession to each other; and the solar system may be a mere mushroom growth of the night, a Jonah's gourd in comparison with the more patriarchal groups of the firmament. What a term of measurement does that give us! The life of the entire stellar universe, however, is but the throb of the second hand on the dial that measures out God's everlasting days.[1]

¶ It was once supposed that the dark patch in the heavens called the Magellan clouds was starless, an enigma of vacancy in the glittering skies. That idea is given up now, although the particular portion of the heavens to which the name is applied is not so rich in stars as the other parts. In all eternity past there is no vacant century, no unpeopled epoch, no barren, unillumined, God-lacking millennium. He fills immeasurable time to its utmost dimension, every moment of the vast eternity, past and to be, pulsating with God's conscious presence.[2]

¶ A striking definition was given by one of the pupils of the deaf and dumb institution at Paris, who, in answer to the question, "What is eternity?" replied, "The lifetime of the Almighty." This is the gauge and measure of our text, "The One that inhabiteth eternity."[3]

3. His Holiness.

In the choice language of this verse, what may be called the natural distance of God from us is measured both on its

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Lesson of a Dilemma*, p. 169.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 171.
[3] A. G. Brown, *In the Valley of Decision*, p. 170.

physical and on its moral side. He is "high," or, as the same word is put in Isaiah's vision, He is lifted up. By this is typified such an elevation as separates the strongest from the weak, the wisest from the foolish, the unbeginning from the creations of yesterday, the Lord of might from His servants; in a word, all that sort of elevation or superiority of God over man which is not moral. As the Maker, Master, Owner, and Disposer of men, Jehovah inhabits the lofty place. But there is another sort of distance between us. The distance betwixt the Best of all and the bad is of quite another kind. His place of habitation is not only high—it is "holy"; and betwixt the Holy One in His sanctuary, and us in our sin, the gulf is not a gulf of being, but a gulf of character. The sky is above the earth, so is He higher than we are; but the sky, when unclouded, is also pure and full of light, unstained by the darkness or foulness of earth; by so much more is He cleaner than we. Thus nature symbolises the double contrast of the Divine to the human.

¶ It is not from the insignificance of man that God's dwelling within him is so strange. It is as much the glory of God to bend His attention on an atom as to uphold the universe. But the marvel is that the habitation which He has chosen for Himself is an impure one. And when He came down from His magnificence to make this world His home, still the same character of condescension was shown through all the life of Christ. Our God selected the society of the outcasts of earth, those whom none else would speak to.[1]

II.

God's Humbleness.

He whose lifetime is infinite duration, whose dwelling-place is infinite space,—He who before the earth and the world were made was no younger, neither will be older when they are all consumed,—whose presence reaches out to the farthest fixed star that eye or telescope has ever descried floating upon the far verge of the universe, and occupies beyond in all the orbits of worlds yet undiscovered, and still beyond in the regions of space where is naught but the possibility of future worlds, and fills all this immensity to repletion,—that this "high and lofty One that

[1] F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 243.

inhabiteth eternity" should enter into some poor, crushed, and broken human spirit, that trembles at the very whisper of His voice, and should make the narrow recesses of that heart His abode, His home—this is the mystery and glory of the Godhead,—not alone that He should be infinite, eternal, immortal, invisible, but that, being all these, He should yet be apprehended by the little mind of a man, and call Himself that man's Friend and Comforter and Father.

¶ I have showed you what is wonderful. Come, now, and I will show you what is more wonderful. For I will show you these infinite spaces of the sky, and the glory of them, and the innumerable host of starry worlds, gathered up in a moment of time, within the tiny pupil of a human eye. It is wonderful that the heavens and the hosts of them should be so great; but that, being so great, they should be able to become so infinitely little,—this passes all wonder. The shepherd stretched upon the ground amid his sheep gazes up into the starry depths, and finds them wonderful; but never thinks how far more wonderful than the heavens which he beholds is himself beholding them. As he lies gazing, long lines of light, from planet and star and constellation, come stretching on through the infinite void spaces, to centre on the lenses of his drowsy eye. Side by side, and all at once, yet never twisted or confused, these ten thousand rays of different light enter the little aperture in the centre of the eye which we call the pupil. There they cross, in a point which has no dimensions, and separate again, and paint in microscopic miniature upon the little surface of the retina, behind the eyeball, the inverted *facsimile* of the visible heavens. There, in the ante-chamber of the brain, marches Orion, with his shining baldric and his jewelled sword; there glow Arcturus and Sirius, and the steadfast North Star; there pass the planets to and fro; and the far-off nebulæ are painted there with suffused and gentle radiance—all the heavens and the glory of them gathered in that slender filament of light, threaded through that tiny aperture, painted by their own rays upon that little patch of nervous network, apprehended, felt, known through and through by that finite human mind. How far stranger and sublimer a thing is this than the mere bulk of the worlds, or the mere chasms of void space in which they hang weltering![1]

1. Four ways may be mentioned in which the humility of God in His dealings with men manifests itself.

[1] L. W. Bacon, *The Simplicity that is in Christ*, p. 321.

1. In the friendship He offers and gives to the poorest of mankind. The broad cleavage of social caste is one of the most familiar facts of life now as in all former times. God simply ignores it. He is the Friend of all—the Friend of the prosperous and the comfortable—if they will only take Him, making their prosperity and comfort a brighter and happier thing, but none the less the Friend of the hard-struggling on whom the burden of existence presses sore. There is many a man and woman in straitened circumstances whom people in a better position would not deign to notice or be seen speaking to on the street. But the Most High has no such feeling. Nor does He deem it beneath Him to have the poor professing His name and openly claiming friendship with Him. All the loftiness of His position creates not the slightest gap of sympathy between Him and the lowliest child of man. And there are burdened hearts in the obscurest ranks of society that feel the joy of His companionship in their life-battle, and know that the King of the Universe is with them as they struggle on.

2. Again the humility of God is seen in His anxiety to lift up the most unworthy. Perfectly free from what we call pride of position, He is also perfectly free from what we know as pride of character. Holy as His Name is, and jealously as He guards His holiness, there is no holding of Himself aloof from the unholy. In fact, the most wonderful thing about God is His persistent endeavour to get into touch with men and women in their sinfulness, and to rescue them from it. The mission of Christ was the humility of God in practical action—God making the first move, God stooping down among the sinful and unworthy to raise and redeem them.

3. The third manifestation of the humility of God is His patience amid the obstinate ingratitude and unfriendliness of men. We are sometimes impatient enough with one another. A slight, an unguarded word, an ungenerous act, is taken as a mortal offence, not to be endured. Pride rises up and stiffens its back, and is hard to be pacified. Meanwhile, how much has God to bear from us all, every day of our life? Blessings received from His hand, and turned into a ground of vainglorious boasting; reverence and obedience withheld in the very presence of clear revelations of His will; the claims of His truth set aside for

self-convenience, self-interest, or self-gratification; rebellious murmuring against the appointments of His providence; the faithless preference of worldly gain to the enjoyment of His favour—all that He has to bear from us.

4. Still another manifestation of the humility of God is His minute care in perfecting His meanest work. It does not at all surprise us that He should lavish skill and care on the more striking works of His hand—on the human body, that miracle of consummate ingenuity; on the gorgeous rainbow, with its perfect arch and exquisite blending of many hues; or on the mighty brilliant suns that flash His glory forth to all the worlds which catch their light. We expect a high degree of finish and care in the grand masterpieces of His workmanship. But what does surprise us is that the Mighty God should be so scrupulous and careful in perfecting the tiniest petal on the tiniest flower, though no eye but His own should ever heed it; in moulding with rare completeness the crystals of the snowflakes which fall and lie away up among the solitudes of the hills; in fashioning into harmonious adaptation to their environment the myriads of insects which crawl on a forest leaf, or in weaving with art unrivalled the delicate structure of a night-moth's wing. Such lowly kind of work it is not easy for us quite to appreciate, nor is it easy to understand the painstaking devotion that labours to bring it to perfection.

2. But it is not merely or mainly by His work in the world that the prophet recognises the humility of God. It is by His condescending to come into the lives of men. Here is the marvel of marvels, that the little soul of man can receive into itself the infinite God.

1. *By the intellect.*—Man receives God into himself by the intellect. We trifle with the facts of our own consciousness if we suffer the theological description of God as *incomprehensible* to divert us from the fact that our minds are made for nothing more expressly than for this, that they should receive God. The lowest rudiments of the knowledge of the simplest forms of matter are the beginnings of the knowledge of God. If we could remember, you and I, now that we are grown, all that came to us in infancy—the first struggles of the childish mind with the

questions that we are not done with yet, we should see how soon the knowledge of God comes to the little one. By such a wonder of creation it is, that He who made the little ball of the human eye so that it can take in the heavens and the earth, has made the petty intellect of man so that it can take in the knowledge of the infinite God.

2. But secondly, it is even a greater wonder than this, that the infinite God, whom the intellect has conceived, draws near for a more intimate society with His creature, and enters the heart of man through the gateway of his *affections*. We say a greater wonder; for it must be confessed that this ideal of the intellect, this centre in which all infinite attributes inhere, does by His very majesty so overawe the heart that we shrink away from Him. By every new perfection of His nature that grows upon our apprehension; by His awful power as the Almighty; by His perfect knowledge as the All-wise; by His unswerving steadfastness as the Faithful and True—the Immutable; by the very infinitude of His nature, He is withdrawn farther and farther from the possibility of being counted among those humble objects on which the tendrils of a human heart are able to lay hold. How, for instance, shall this Inhabitant of eternity, whose name is *Holy*, be well pleased with His petty creature who has dared withstand His perfect law, and looks shrinking toward the throne of infinite Majesty, fearing and crying, "Unclean! unclean!" The very arguments by which we climb to the knowledge of the infinite Spirit are like mountains that separate us from any relation with Him of childlike prayer and mutual love. But a trustful confidence can say to these mountains, "Be ye removed and be ye cast into the sea," and it shall be done.

3. But the prophet's immediate concern is not with God as received by the intellect or as received by the affections, but as holding spiritual communion with the *contrite* and the *humble*.

(1) Humble and contrite,—we use these words often, but we hardly think of what they mean. "A broken and a contrite heart," says David, "Thou wilt not despise." A contrite heart is *more* than a broken one,—one crushed to powder, that is, and that feels itself dust and ashes. It is by a real, deep, and last-

ing sense of sin; by feeling it as a personal pain and grief, a crushing burden that lays the spirit low, an overpowering oppression that grinds it to dust—it is by this and this only that God's company is to be secured; it is where this temper is found that He finds His home.

¶ The word "contrition" in the text is a very strong word. It literally means a pounded state, as of a stone which by blow on blow of heavy hammers, or the grinding of waggon wheels, has been crushed into dust. By this vigorous metaphor it strives to make vivid to us the moral state of a man whose whole strength of self-reliance and erectness of moral carriage have been broken down through the sense of guilt and moral weakness; one who by repeated trials of his own instability, and blow after blow of discouraging rebuke from God, feels himself left in the path of evil a heart-broken man, over whom the trampling feet of innumerable masterful sins, with all their evil followers, seem to find free passage; a man beaten down and crushed out of spirit by vain struggles against sin and inescapable poundings from the violated laws of God.

(2) Do not think that this is said only of the beginning of the Christian's conversion: that though he must have a contrite and humble spirit *before* God will come to dwell with him, yet his heart is healed and his spirit exalted as soon as God is come. It is with the heart that is—not only that has been—humble and contrite, that God will dwell; it is with the spirit that does not forget its own sin, even when it feels and knows and rejoices in God's grace. Let no Christian, however true his faith, however warm his love, ever think while he is yet upon earth that his repentance has lasted long enough or been deep enough, that he has done with sorrow for old sins, or watchfulness against present temptations, and may give himself up entirely to the joy and peace of believing. Let no man imagine this, unless his faith and love be greater than his who, only a year before he finished his course, told how "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

I with the contrite spirit dwell;
The broken heart is mine abode;
Such spikenard yields a fragrant smell,
And such are all the saints of God.[1]

[1] Richard Thomas Pembroke Pope.

(3) What is involved in humility, or what is it to say that a man is humble? It is just to say that he takes his own place in regard to God; that he is contented to be nothing, and to see God to be all in all: this is humility. Observe, there are two things here: that I should *know* my nothingness, and that I *should be contented with* my nothingness.

But humility on this earth must take a peculiar character from the circumstances of those in whom it exists; and that character is expressed by the word *contrition*. Every angel in heaven is humble: but contrition has reference to sin, and to the feeling that I am not only *nothing*, but worse than nothing. There is nothing bad in being nothing; but there is something bad in having forgotten my nothingness, in having fancied myself something, in having given place to pride, and in having become a god to myself. *This is sin.* Therefore humility in man never can come alone; never merely in the way of feeling "I am nothing, and I am contented to be nothing." There cannot be in a man the knowledge of his nothingness without a sense of contrast between this nothingness and his natural desire to be something. Contrition—the deep consciousness of unworthiness, of great evil as my own, of great sin as the just charge of God against me—is that which puts the sorrowful ingredient into humility. Humility as the condition of a sinner cannot exist without sorrow, sorrow for the sin which he has committed against God.

¶ Among the nuns in a convent not far from Rome, one had appeared who laid claim to gifts of inspiration and prophecy, and the abbess advised the Holy Father at Rome of the wonderful powers shown by her novice. The Pope did not well know what to make of these claims, and he consulted St. Philip Neri. Philip undertook to visit the nun and ascertain her character. He threw himself on his mule and hastened through mud and mire to the convent. He begged the abbess to summon the nun without delay. As soon as she appeared, he stretched out his leg all bespattered with mud, and desired her to draw off his boots. The young nun, who had become the object of much attention and respect, drew back with anger and refused. Philip ran out, mounted, and returned instantly to the Pope; give yourself no uneasiness, Holy Father, any longer: here is no miracle, for here is no humility.[1]

[1] Emerson, *Conduct of Life.*

4. It is a very reviving advent when to such a soul God comes to dwell. This crushing sorrow and hopelessness in the fight with sin has a killing power. It kills self; but at the coming of God a new self is born. And fear not but He will come, if you be but contrite. For as surely as the holy God has a repulsion from the impenitent proud, who judge that they can do without Him, so surely is He attracted by the crushed humility of the sinner who cannot do without Him. This attraction was strong enough to draw Him once from heaven. It is strong enough to draw Him into every broken heart.

Not simply to sympathise, but to save, to revive the heart of the contrite one, our Jesus comes. This is the great message of Christianity to the world. It is a message of hope to every heart.

To revive—then they are dead! He whose spirit knows his own low estate, whose heart is crushed by the sense of his own sins, feels himself dead indeed, like unto them that are wounded, cut away from the hand of God. But behold, the hand of the Lord is not shortened. He hears the cry out of the lowest pit, in the place of darkness and in the deep: "Though I go down into the grave, Thou art there also." He dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Thy home is with the humble, Lord,
  The simplest are the best;
Thy lodging is in child-like hearts;
  Thou makest there Thy rest.

Dear Comforter! Eternal Love!
  If Thou wilt stay with me,
Of lowly thoughts, and simple ways,
  I'll build a house for Thee.

Who made this beating heart of mine
  But Thou, my heavenly Guest?
Let no one have it then but Thee,
  And let it be Thy rest.

Thy sweetness hath betrayed Thee, Lord!
  Great Spirit, is it Thou?
Deeper and deeper in my heart
  I feel Thee resting now.[1]

[1] F. W. Faber.

III.

God's Double Dwelling-Place.

We know and believe separately the doctrines of the majesty and of the mercy of God; but it probably seldom occurs to a Christian to think of one as a result of the other. We say that God forgives us our sins because Christ died for us; or if we go further back, and give an account of the coming and redemption of Christ, we say that He came because of the love of God, both of the Father and of the Son, for the men whom He had made and who needed His help. It would not occur to us to say that God sent His Son into the world because He is almighty, and infinite, and all-glorious, or that Jesus came to save us because He is the eternal God. Yet this, or something very like it, is what Isaiah does say in the text. The verse gives a double description of God's nature and attributes, as containing majesty and mercy, so that He is equally at home in both.

It speaks of the dwelling of God with the humble, of the mercy of God to the contrite, not as fruits of the Incarnation or of the Sacrifice of Christ, but as results of the glory of the Eternal Father, the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. Of course one is as true as the other: it is through Jesus that we have access to the Father; it is he who loves Jesus that His Father will love; it is with Jesus that the Father will come unto him, and Both make their abode with him. But the special truth that seems to be set forth in these verses is, that the Incarnation and the Sacrifice of Christ, while they are to us the cause and the source of all blessing, of all pardon, of all grace, of all holiness, of all salvation, are themselves not the cause but the effect of the mercy and the love of God the Father; as Jesus says Himself, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son."

The condescension of Almighty God found no difficulty at all in bridging the essential interval of nature between His own altitude and the low estate of His human creature, simply as a creature. Freely he spanned that interval to walk with man among the trees of his garden. The real difficulty has been purely a moral one, in the incompatibility and mutual repulsion

of the pure from the impure. There is nothing save your sin that hinders God from dwelling with any one of you. And therefore it must be pressed upon you, that, if ever the absent God is to become a partner of your inner spiritual life, a friendly inmate of your heart, it must be through altered moral conditions on your part. Moral fellowship is practicable only on a ground of moral affinity; it is like that dwells with like. Some rudimentary likeness to the Holy One there must be first in you, if in you the Holy One is to reside. And the beginning of all moral affinity of man with God lies in the moral state described as a contrite and humble spirit.

Immeasurably distant from each other these homes of God seem to be. The one is very spacious, the dwelling of cherubim and seraphim, and of a great multitude redeemed from among men; the other is narrow and contracted, for it is no more than a single human heart. The one is marked by everlastingness; the other is full of vicissitude, and such changes pass over it, of light and shadow, of repose and storm. The one is stainless, its bulwarks diamonds square, its gates right orient pearl; but the other is broken before the consciousness of sin, and the righteousness of the Lord, and the retribution it deserves. And yet, and yet God resides not only in high heaven, but in the individual heart, the changeful life, the downcast soul.

Do not let us forget that it is Christ who links into unity the low house and the high. He knows them both. He left the dignities and delights of the one for the humiliations of the other; and, having served and suffered within its doors, He has returned again to the palace of the King. Why was it that He went out and came back? It was to taste all my need, to cancel all my sin, to open to my soul the gates of life everlasting I look on Him, I believe in Him, I love Him, and thus I have the assurance of the incorruptible inheritance. Jesus in the heart is heaven in the heart here and now, and it will be the heart in heaven ere long. And thus the contrite spirit comes to the high and holy place.[1]

¶ William Morris, the poet, was also an art-dealer, a painter, a manufacturer of porcelain, and an advanced Socialist, and appeared once to show sympathy with Socialists persecuted for free

[1] A. Smellie.

speech. He dwelt in the high and holy places of song and beauty and with the despised, police-hunted East End Socialists. All these relations are congruous, though some might abstractedly argue against their unity in one man. The largeness of the universe only discloses the sufficiency of Christian faith. The light in the eye can say: I dwell in the eye and in the vast fields of space. The air in the lungs can say the same. We must connect in thought the immanent and transcendent God; Christ in you the hope of glory; Christ as thine and filling all things. If God is thus so great and rich in His revelation to us, then we have explained to us the secret of the power and blessedness of Christian experience. It is communion with the High and Mighty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy.[1]

¶ That light and heat rays are both present in the sunbeam is a familiar fact, but it is not so well known that the optic nerve which is sensitive to the light rays is unconscious of the presence of the heat rays. Professor Tyndall verified this fact by a most interesting and critical experiment. Having prepared a slide by a chemical process which made it exclude the light rays and give free admission to the heat rays, he cut a small hole in a screen so that the heat rays passing through the slide could fall upon a piece of platinum foil. The platinum at once grew red-hot. At the risk of destroying his own sight he then brought the retina of the eye into the focus of the heat rays. Not the slightest sensation of heat was experienced. The explanation, he tells us, is probably this—the oscillations of the heat rays, which differ from those of the light rays, are not timed to the conditions of the optic nerve. That nerve has been so adjusted that it responds only to the light rays with which it is in consonance, and is quite dead to the heat rays which elude its consciousness. And is it not thus with that sense of God which awakens within us? Power and love unite themselves in His person, but the scientist fails to realise His power, whilst the penitent is vividly sensible of His tenderness.[2]

¶ "I dwell in the high and holy place; *with Him also!*" What a wonderful conjunction! I could not but think of the great gathering of waters in the Elan Valley, and then the further thought that that vast volume limits itself to enter my own home. Every day I have water from the Welsh hills![3]

Lord! Thou hast told us that there be
Two dwellings which belong to Thee,
And those two, that's the wonder,
Are far asunder.

[1] J. Matthews. [2] T. G. Selby. [3] J. H. Jowett.

The one the highest heaven is,
The mansions of eternal bliss;
The other's the contrite
And humble sprite.

Not like the princes of the earth,
Who think it much below their birth,
To come within the door
Of people poor.

No, such is Thy humility,
That though Thy dwelling be on high,
Thou dost Thyself abase
To the lowest place.

Where'er Thou seest a sinful soul
Deploring his offences foul,
To him Thou wilt descend,
And be his friend.

Thou wilt come in, and with him sup,
And from a low state raise him up,
Till Thou hast made him eat
Blest angel's meat.

Thus Thou wilt him with honour crown
Who in himself is first cast down,
And humbled for his sins,
That Thy love wins.

Though heaven be high, the gate is low,
And he who comes in there must bow;
The lofty looks shall ne'er
Have entrance there.

O God! since Thou delight'st to rest
In the humble contrite breast
First make me so to be,
Then dwell with me.[1]

[1] Thomas Washbourne.

ARISE! SHINE!

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ARISE! SHINE!

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.—lx. 1.

THE address is directed to Zion-Jerusalem, which is regarded as a woman. Stricken down by the punitive judgment of God, brought down by inward prostration, she lies on the ground: then the cry reaches her ears—"Arise!" It is a strength-imparting word, which reanimates her frame, so that she can arise from the ground on which she is lying, as it were under the ban. The power-imparting word "Arise!" is supplemented by a second, "be light!" [1]

The prophet is primarily addressing his speech to an awakening nation. Here is a people opening its eyes upon recovered sovereignty, stretching out its hands to a restored ministry, feeling out for enlarged dominion. And here is a statesman-prophet instructing the newly opened eyes, feeding and training the sight with large and healthy ideals. To direct a nation's views is to shape its policies, and to determine the trend and colour of its life.

But the glory of the ideal is still further enriched and intensified. Old Testament words must to us now receive New Testament contents. Old Testament visions must acquire New Testament significance. We cannot take Isaiah's ideal and employ it with Isaiah's limitation; we must carry over his vocabulary into the fuller day and let it receive enlargement in the life and mind of Christ.

¶ Those who have ever been privileged to see from the shoulder or the summit of a mountain in Switzerland the sun rise will never forget that wonderful sight. They will remember how, in the chill of the hour before dawn, great clouds had brooded down in the valley, rolling mists had lain beneath their

[1] F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on Isaiah*, ii. p. 382.

feet, and thick darkness had dwelt over the whole earth. Suddenly, as they stood there, there has been a faint flush of pink on one snowy summit, then another, then another. The pink has changed to a bright gold, then to a deeper gold, and then, suddenly, like a giant set free, up with great leaps and bounds and a most astonishing speed has come the sun and flooded the world with light; and as it has come up it has seemed to cry to the sleeping earth, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."[1]

¶ Around is absolute blackness; the valleys are in gloom; trees, rivers, towns have been obscured; nothing is visible but that dim shaft of granite rising into the silence of the sky. Suddenly we may imagine a spirit's voice crying, "The light has come." Instantly there is a glow on the mountain—trees, rivers, towns begin to take shape; the whole world has changed. The point to be observed here is that the light was from God. The city was exhorted to be in a condition in which the glory of God might be reflected from it.[2]

Of our relation to the ancient prophecies, we can say, adapting words from Browning's *Paracelsus*, that we are "the heirs of hopes too fair to turn out false." It is precisely the fact that the colours of the prophet's palette are of such an unearthly fairness that justifies us in believing that our hopes *will* yet be fulfilled. The fact that the Perfect Man, the world's Saviour, *has* come is our warrant for this. If so unexpected an event has occurred, nothing is now too great to hope for. Take Isa. lx., which a great French scholar, who, in spite of his unbelief, continually falls into the language of faith, has finely called "a ray from the glances of Jesus." If Jesus once lived upon the earth, lifting up all those with whom He came vitally into contact, surely this most radiant prophecy, which expresses the undoubting belief, not only of the prophet, but of Jesus, must itself be fulfilled.[3]

I.

Arise.

The word "Arise," or some word with the same meaning, is of great importance in Scripture, and occurs in several places.

[1] Bishop A. F. W. Ingram. [2] A. H. Bradford.
[3] T. K. Cheyne in *The Thinker*, Jan. 1892, p. 8.

¶ There is a very remarkable correspondence reiterated in the text between the illuminating God and the illuminated Zion. The word for shine is connected with the word for light, and may fairly be rendered "lighten" or "be light." Twice the phrase "thy light" is employed; once to mean the light which is thine because it shines on thee; once to mean the light which is thine because it shines from thee. The other word, three times repeated, for *rising*, is the technical word which expresses the sunrise, and is applied both to the flashing glory that falls upon Zion and to the light that gleams from her. Touched by the sun, she becomes a sun, and blazes in her heaven in a splendour that draws men's hearts.[1]

1. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." Here we have an exhortation to the dead. It is addressed to them by God, who is the Giver of life. It is the first of all exhortations. When the dead hear the voice of God they come forth. The moment that Jesus spoke that word of power to the man who had his dwelling among the tombs, that moment the man felt that he must obey. He became alive unto God for evermore. And not only alive for evermore, but also a witness for God, a witness to His power to raise the dead. "Go home and tell thy friends"; and he went.

2. The present passage may come next—"Arise, shine; for thy light is come." This is not the voice of God the Creator. It is the voice of Jehovah, the covenant God. He speaks to His own people with whom He has made a perpetual covenant, that they will reflect His light and glorify Him upon earth. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

¶ There came, once, to a meeting I was addressing, a brother who had been, for years, earnest after the ordinary fashion of Christian young men; and the Lord so guided me that I spoke about the usefulness that some young men might acquire if they would but bestir themselves. I urged the desirability of some attempting to preach in the street, who might find their gifts abundant for that work. Well, this young man went back and tried what he could do for Christ, and God greatly blessed him.

[1] A. Maclaren.

That young man was Mr. W. P. Lockhart, of Liverpool, who is at this moment pastor of the church meeting in the Toxteth Tabernacle, a large edifice erected by the people whom he gathered by his preaching. Our friend has, with much acceptance, occupied this pulpit, and been of great service to our denomination; but, if it had not been for God's awakening him under that particular address, he might have remained just the ordinary trader that he was, serving the Lord in a very proper way, but nothing noteworthy might have come of it.[1]

3. "Arise and be doing" (1 Ch. xxii. 16). This comes third because it directs us to some definite way of letting our light shine. It may be "Arise and build," as in 1 Ch. xxii. 19, Neh. ii. 20, there being so many who give their life to pulling down rather than to building up. Or it may be "Arise and go to Nineveh," as the command came to Jonah (i. 2, iii. 2), that we may do something which demands faith and self-control. This is the voice of the Lord the King.

4. Last of all we hear the voice of the tender friend. He speaks from the humble supper-room where He deigns to hold fellowship with His own: "Arise, let us go hence" (John xiv. 31). He calls us now to the fellowship of His sufferings, that we may be made conformable unto His death.

¶ I heard M. Monod say last year at Keswick, mourning as he was the death of his wife, which had taken place only a fortnight before: "As the gates seem to open, and the Master's voice is heard saying, 'Arise, come away,' it is never going alone, or to be alone, but it is 'Let *us* go hence.'"[2]

II.

Shine.

If we are light, we shall be able to shine; if we are light, we are bound to shine; if we are light, we shall want to shine.

1. *If we have light we shall be able to shine.*—Any man can manifest what he is, unless he is a coward. Any man can talk about the things that are interesting to him, if only they are interesting to him. Any man that knows Jesus Christ can say so; and perhaps the utterance of the simple personal conviction is

[1] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2617, p. 170.
[2] H. W. Webb-Peploe, *Calls to Holiness*, p. 191.

the best method of proclaiming His name. All other things are surplusage. They are good when they come, they may be done without. Learning, eloquence, and the like of these, are the adornments of the lamp, but it does not matter whether the lamp be a gorgeous affair of gilt and richness, or whether it be a poor piece of black tin; the main question is: are there wick and oil in it? The pitcher may be gold and silver, or costly crystal or marble, or it may be a poor potsherd. Never mind. If there is water in it, it will be precious to a thirsty lip. And so, every Christian man has the power, if he be a Christian, to proclaim his Master; and if he has the Light, he will be able to show it. This suggests for us the condition of all faithful and effectual witness for Jesus Christ. Cultivate understanding and all other faculties as much as you like; but remember this, the fitness to impart is to possess, and that being taken for granted, the main thing is secured. As long as the electric light is in contact with the battery so long does it burn. Electricians have been trying during the past few years to make accumulators, things in which they can store the influence and put it away in a corner and use it so that the light need not be in connection with the battery; and they have not succeeded; at least, it is only a very partial success. You and I cannot start accumulators. Let us remember personal contact is power, and only the personal contact. Arise, shine.

¶ The saints, while they have been the most invincible, have been also the most dependent of mankind. For of moral as of material light there are two kinds, one inherent and independent, the other derived and borrowed. The lamp on the table burns; the mirror opposite shines. Our sun, and the multitude of stars, all blaze with their own fire; but the sphere we inhabit is a planet whose milder lustre is entirely borrowed from the sun, whence all its light and loveliness are drawn.[1]

2. *If we are light we are bound to shine.*—That is an obvious principle. The capacity to shine is the obligation to shine, for we are all knit together by such mystical cords in this strange brotherhood of humanity that every one of us holds his position as trust property for the use and behoof of others, and in the present case that which we have received (and the price at which

[1] G. A. Chadwick, *Pilate's Gift*, p. 164.

we have received it) gives an edge to the keenness of the obligation, and adds a new band to the stringency of the command. It is because Christ has given Himself thus to us that the possession of Him binds us to the imitation of His example, and the impartation of Him to all our brethren. The obligation lies at our doors, and cannot be delegated or devolved.

¶ The most extraordinary of all British lighthouses is that found on Arnish Rock, Stornoway Bay, a rock separated from the Island of Lewis by a channel over 500 feet in width. On this rock a conical beacon is erected, and on its summit a lantern is fixed, from which, night after night, shines a light seen by fishermen far and wide. The way in which this peculiar lighthouse is illuminated is this: On the Island of Lewis, 500 feet away or so, is an ordinary lighthouse, and from a window on its tower a stream of light is projected on to a mirror in the lantern on the summit of the Arnish Rock. The consequence is that a lighthouse exists having neither lamp nor lighthouse keeper.

3. *If we have light we shall wish to shine.*—What shall we say about the Christian people that never really had such a wish? God forbid that we should say they have no light; but this we may say, it burns very dimly. There is no better test of the depth and the purity of our personal attachment to and possession of our Master than the impulse that will spring from them to communicate them to others. "Necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is me if I preach not." That should be the word of every one of us; and it will be, in the measure in which we ourselves get thorough hold of Jesus Christ. "This is a day of good tidings. We cannot hold our peace," said the handful of lepers in the camp; "if we are silent some mischief will come to us." "Thy Word, when I shut it up in my bones and said I will speak no more in Thy name, was like a fire, and I was weary of forbearing and I could not stay."

¶ One hot June night, on the banks of the Hudson River in America, I watched the fire-flies dancing like fairy lamps against the deep blue-black of the sky. Now and again one would flare with exceptional brilliancy. I was told that it was when they were attacked by a hostile insect, and that their source of protection was to emit a keener brilliancy to discomfit and dazzle the adversary. Those that failed to let their light shine fell victims to the depredator.[1]

[1] B. Wilberforce.

III.

For Thy Light is Come.

The prophet enables us to see how bright the light is that has dawned upon the Holy City of Zion by presenting in the following verses a graphic picture of the gross darkness that still lies upon the surrounding nations. And it is good for us, even as we rejoice in the light, to recall sometimes the darkness from which we have been rescued.

¶ It is not so many years ago that there was a young man, who did not know his right hand from his left in spiritual things; he put darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; and that man, not so young now, knows the Saviour, he has learnt the evil of sin, and he has rejoiced in all the delights of pardon. Was that young man yourself? If so, you may well prize your present privileges. It is not so long ago that there was a man who was in the darkness of soul-agony. His sin was heavy upon him; God's hand pressed him till all the moisture of his being seemed to exude, and he was like a plant withered in the long droughts of autumn. He cried to the Lord, but for a while he received no response to his petitions. He begged for mercy, but it did not come. Now, that same person is sitting here, thankful that he is pardoned, and that he knows how he has been delivered from the wrath of God, and he blesses that Divine Substitute who took upon Himself his sin, and with it that sin's penalty, and so delivered the guilty one from the wrath to come. Oh, what a change there is in that young man! That young man is yourself; is he not?[1]

There are three stages in the history of the soul's enlightenment.

1. *Spiritual penitence.*—I say *spiritual* penitence, because there is a repentance which is by no means a rising of God's light in the soul, but merely a transient emotion, which passes into indifference and may deepen into despair. True repentance is the turning of the whole heart to God on the discovery of its own darkness and estrangement. Its chief cause is not so much the remembrance of guilty acts, as the feeling of a guilty heart—it is not the sense of sin—it is not the terror of judgment—it is the feeling of a deep darkness in the soul itself,

[1] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2617, p. 171.

and the turning of the soul to the Lord that He may make it pure.

2. *Spiritual penitence must pass into spiritual love.*—Again the word *spiritual* is emphatic, in contrast with that semi-pious emotion which is always convulsively striving to learn whether the soul loves God or not. Spiritual love is not so much the feeling of our love to God, as of His love to us. It is the belief that He loved us amidst all our misery, and coldness, and sin—that from childhood the same loving power has guided us. It is the love which has swept into the soul, subduing its whole being, and becoming its ruling emotion. And this is requisite, because love is the insight of the soul, it colours all its visions, for the ruling passion of a man creates his world.

3. *Spiritual love necessitates spiritual prayer.*—Again the word *spiritual* is emphatic. The first cry of life is prayer; but by spiritual prayer I mean living fellowship with the Father, the prayer which pervades the whole life of the soul. This is the full dawning of the light of God. He who lives in prayer, lives before the unveiled eternity. This life of prayer loosens from the bonds of sense, and elevates the spirit in the unclouded regions of Divine glory. When man daily walks with God *thus*, then he is living in the light. By penitence, therefore, the soul turns Godwards; by love its eye is opened; and by prayer it moves in the sunrise of the eternal light.[1]

¶ In the days of the monarchy in Madagascar the festival of the native New Year was ushered in at sunset by the Queen taking a bath. That ceremony over, and the short twilight having ended in complete darkness, a signal was given by lighting a torch outside the palace in Tananarive. The signal was answered at once. Bunches of hay fastened to poles had been made ready, and these were lighted and waved on high. Throughout the city, on the wide plains beyond, on the hill-sides beyond these, and on to the farthest ridges, these lights gleamed in the clear darkness of a tropical night. Then in widening circles, North, South, East and West, torches blazed from hill-top to hill-top, until, in about twenty minutes from the start, the signal would be flashed to the writer's district some 200 miles to the South. Almost instantly, the whole country-side would be gilded with these tiny points of flame. In appearance it was much as if on some frosty November night the multitudinous stars had slid down from the

[1] E. L. Hull, *Sermons Preached at King's Lynn*, 1st series, p. 65.

sky to bespangle the pall of earthly darkness. Everywhere throughout the land the palace-torch had been translated into a call, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come."

¶ Certain men slept upon a plain, and the night was chill and dark. And as they slept, at that hour when night is darkest, one stirred. Far off to the eastward, through his half-closed eyelids, he saw, as it were, one faint line, thin as a hair's width, that edged the hill-tops. And he whispered to his fellows: "The dawn is coming." But they with fast closed eyelids murmured, "He lies, there is no dawn." Nevertheless, day broke.[1]

IV.

And the Glory of the Lord is Risen upon Thee.

It is wonderful, not only that God should give us light, but that that light should be His own glory. Creation is a part of God's glory, but it is only a moonlight glory compared with that of redemption. God, in the gift of Jesus Christ, displayed the whole of His nature. Creation is not a canvas large enough for the whole image of God to be stamped upon it. Byron speaks of God's face being mirrored in the sea; but there is not space enough for the face of Deity to be fully reflected in the broad Atlantic, or in all the oceans put together. The image of God is to be fully seen in Jesus Christ, and nowhere else; for there you behold attributes which Creation cannot display. Creation can manifest love, power, wisdom, and much else; but how can Creation manifest justice, and justice lying side by side with mercy, like the lion and the lamb? It is only in Christ that you can see this wondrous sight, God hating sin with perfect hatred, but yet loving sinners with much more than the tenderness of a mother towards her child.

These great words, "the glory of the Lord," ought not to be merely a vague phrase to us. You remember what power upon our spiritual life St. Paul associates with that glory. "We all with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." So he says in another place, "That which is illuminated is light." The personal transforma-

[1] Olive Schreiner, *Trooper Peter Halket*.

tion which the best of us are still conscious of needing—the change from fleshly creatures into spiritual, from what we have been into what we may be—is to be wrought through our submitting ourselves with inward willingness and desire to the glory which shines upon us. Divine light cannot be divorced from warmth and quickening. The Spirit is always proceeding from the Father and the Son. In all who set their spiritual eyes upon the glory of the Lord, the life-giving power of the Spirit is working, and is effecting that blessed transformation. They are being transformed into an image for which they were created. And the image is that of the King of Glory, who is Himself the image of God.

Christ is not to be reduced into words. That very word "glory" itself testifies that He transcends all words. Yet there are two words which let us into the secrets of the revelation of the Divine nature in Christ. They are "grace" and "righteousness"; we can hardly make too much of these, as indicating the Image which is shown to us, and into which it is our high destiny to be transformed. These two words are of unlimited significance; the powers they signify are able to invest themselves with all ideals which should draw us upwards and onwards. Grace and righteousness are as windows through which we may gain trustworthy visions of the incomprehensible nature of our God, and they are adequate characters of the nature into which we ourselves are to grow. Grace is the compassionate issue of the eternal love; righteousness is the expression of the Divine order. To what better things can we look up, towards what better things can we strive, than grace and righteousness?

There are three ways in which the glory of the Lord manifests itself in life—

1. *In the majesty of holiness.*—Holiness means, literally, separateness from sin, by dedication to God; from the world, in living by heavenly laws and aspirations. In saying this, we must carefully avoid an error. Our fathers, in the early centuries, drew a broad outward line of demarcation between the Church and the world. That was their fault; but it was in harmony with the tendency of the age. We are not likely to

fall into such an error. Men now are, perhaps, too much afraid of standing alone. The hollow spirit of a hollow Christianity sneers at the lonely grandeur of a saint. The endeavour of many Christian people seems now to be to conform as much as possible to the world, without being excluded from the pale of the Church. One result of this is that the power of the Christian Church has greatly fallen away. But we must remember that Christian separateness is not external nonconformity. It is being in the world and yet above it;—having saintly separateness of soul amidst all the duties;—making men feel that your inner life is apart from the business of the world; that your heart is in eternity. Now this must result from the dawning of the light. He who communes with God will not fear to be alone. Seeing the Invisible, he will have too strong a faith in the Kingdom of heaven to seek to uphold it by excitement, convulsive effort, or outward show. A pilgrim of the morning, he will not go with the tide of the world. In him there will be a solemn sense of eternity—the looking onwards of an eye that beholds the dawning glory. And this is power—the truest, deepest power.

2. *In the beauty of unselfishness.*—The life of God is the life of the Cross in the heart. This is a manifestation of God's light in the soul. Let that light dawn, and men will see the Cross-life there. This is the light which the world so much needs to-day. This is the light which made the Pantheon crumble, and the Greek altars fall. Men believe in Christ as a beautiful image—in Christianity as an old fable. Show them His reality, and reveal to them its power in your daily lives.

3. *In the earnestness of your efforts for men.*—If the light has risen, you know its power. If the glory has dawned, you feel the realities of life. In that illumination who can be slothfully calm? There is a spirit of so-called refinement abroad now which makes men afraid to speak of those things which lie deepest in the heart. Was it so with the great ones of old? Was it so with Paul? Was he afraid to speak in the name of Christ before Agrippa? Did he shrink before the fiery scorn of Festus? Go, then, bear witness of that light. Live out your prayers in daily actions. You say it is hard, difficult, impossible. Yes, it is hard—in all ages men have found it so: but

remember the glory of the future is the result of your struggle to-day. Struggle on, then, the morning is breaking, the day is at hand when "the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended!"

¶ There is a certain picture in the National Gallery which, Ruskin says, reveals the first sign and token of the Renaissance. The painter has partially shaken himself free from the cold, stiff, imitative traditionalisms of mediæval art; he has partially broken the bands of the mere copyist, he has gone out to Nature, has been for himself, and has brought back a bird! That bird, set there in the midst of much that is still ceremonial and traditional, Ruskin declares to be one of the first signs of the renaissance of art! Yes, but the coming of that bird was subsequent to the coming of a new atmosphere! The renaissance of art succeeded to the renaissance of religion! The bird was significant of a more intimate touch with reality, but this intimate touch with reality was the issue of a more intimate communion with God. The sensitive perception of the beautiful was the fruit of the re-discovery of the beauty of the Lord. The cheery light and the genial heat of the Renaissance are to be explained by "the Sun of Righteousness," upon whose glory men's eyes were gazing again in ravishing and exultant delight. The people had obtained a new vision of the light and glory of God, and they rose into a sweeter and more wholesome life.[1]

[1] J. H. Jowett.

The Lord's Sermon.

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The Lord's Sermon.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.—lxi. 1.

As we speak of the "The Lord's Prayer" we may call this "The Lord's Sermon." He adopted it as His own (Luke iv. 16–22) as He did not the Lord's Prayer. It is the model of all sermons. It contains all that a sermon need or can contain—(1) The Audience, (2) the Message, (3) the Preacher.

I.

The Audience.

There are four classes.

1. *The meek*, or "the poor."—It is the same word that is applied to Moses in Num. xii. 3, and it means the opposite of self-seeking. In Luke iv. 18 it is given as "the poor," the same word being used as Jesus uses when He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. v. 3). "Blessed be ye poor" (Luke vi. 20). Perhaps its meaning is best expressed by the phrase, "poor and needy." The "poor" may not be blessed as such, and the rich may; but the poor are more likely to be blessed because more likely to *feel their need.* It is a gospel to them that need and know it. It is for all the young, all the helpless, all but the self-sufficient.

The Hebrew word has just a shade of ambiguity between "poor" simply and "poor in spirit," and we can easily imagine it susceptible of both renderings. It is a word, too, which comes into one of those central passages of the Old Testament

which our Lord took up most directly as His own teaching. It will be observed that, in the Revised Version of Isa. lxi. 1, the old rendering is retained: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the *meek*": but "poor" is given in the margin as an alternative for "meek"; and in the quotation of this passage in St. Luke iv. 18, "poor" is the rendering both in the Greek and in the English. In Ps. ix. 18, "The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever," the Revised Version has "poor" in the text, "meek" in the margin. There can be little doubt that the Hebrew (or Aramaic) corresponding to this was the word originally used in the first beatitude, and that the evangelist has represented it to us by an apt and just paraphrase.[1]

When *'ānāw* is translated "the poor" or "the afflicted, oppressed," or "the helpless, the meek," its exact significance will be best understood if we bear in mind the traits in the character of the toil-worn man, his poverty of spirit, his slowness to insist upon his rights, his patient forbearance, his long enduring of any number of wrongs. It may be said that this is introducing into the slow-moving, tranquil Eastern world the conditions of life which pertain only to Western civilisation. But an *enslaved* nation, as the Israelites were more than once in the earlier part of their history, would be likely to know something of the wearing effect of laborious toil on both the body and the mind, and that knowledge has left its impression on the plastic surface of their language.[2]

¶ The Rev. Thomas Guthrie, fresh from his Forfarshire parish, bounded by the restless North Sea, with singing larks and decent peasants, looked down through the iron gratings on George IV. Bridge on the one he had come to cultivate. It was before the age of the City Improvement Commission, and the Cowgate showed battered humanity in a state not now visible there. High-flatted houses, each having the population of a village, with windows innocent of glass and stuffed with dirty rags, some of these tenements were the scene of domestic tragedies, for in one of their upper flats five families had been made fatherless through the fever. But the dwellers did not mind, for Guthrie noted

[1] W. Sanday in *The Expositor*, 4th series, iii. p. 313.
[2] A. T. Burbridge in *The Preacher's Magazine*, 1901, p. 542.

women lying over window-sills, and others at close mouths with children in arms, chaffing passers-by, or screaming each other down. It looked to the new minister a venture into the darkness of a coal-pit from the light of day. A hand was laid on his shoulder. Then the voice of Dr. Chalmers, whose face glowed with enthusiasm as, waving his arm, he exclaimed, "A beautiful field, sir, a very fine field of operation."[1]

2. *The broken-hearted.*—These have more than a general sense of need. They have learned in the school of suffering. They can recall loss, perhaps betrayal, at least disappointment. They cannot help recalling it. For its scar is on them. They bear about in their hearts the marks of wrong—wrong which they have suffered, and, yet more deeply, wrong which they have done. They are broken-hearted; they cannot receive or they cannot give restitution.

The exact significance of *shābhar* is "to break in pieces"; thus there is contained in it the idea of destruction, with its resultants, "helplessness, uselessness, inactivity." For instance, *shābhar* is used of ships broken by the storm, of the tearing asunder of wild beasts, of the dismembering of corporate bodies, *e.g.* a kingdom, a city, a people. And the verb must suffer no impoverishment of meaning if the exact significance of the now familiar expression, "the broken-hearted," is to be retained. The phrase, "a broken heart," is descriptive not simply of an organ full of aching and suffering, but of an organ which, while it is racked with pain, is also helpless, unable to do what is required of it. That which can happen to any physical organ or limb of the body can happen also to the heart conceived of as the centre of man's emotional life. Struck with a sudden blow, the arm is broken, hangs down suffering and useless. Overtaken by a sudden calamity the heart is broken, suffering intensely, but amid all its suffering useless. The broken heart can still feel, it is not dead or hardened like the heart of the wicked or the stubborn, but it can no longer prompt, purpose inspire, urge on to fresh effort, to victory or death; its vitol strength is gone. Some forms of suffering act as a stimulus, they arouse new energy in a man, but the suffering of the broken-hearted is accompanied by a listlessness, an apparent

[1] T. Cochrane, *Home Mission Field*, p. 7.

inability to do anything but suffer, an utter helplessness not simply of body but also of mind and soul. It is this element of helplessness which constitutes the tragedy of a broken heart, and it is this element of helplessness which is emphasised in the Hebrew term *nishberē-lēbh*. Yet even in this most disastrous effect of human trouble, when sorrow robs the heart of its last resources and strength, the Bible discovers an opportunity for the coming of God: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart," "a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Is not every form of human helplessness a recommendation to the Deity? Must not this extreme form be so most of all?[1]

¶ An old woman came into the city from the country to buy medicine at a native medicine vendor's. While the man was preparing the medicine, his wife came into the shop, and noticing the old woman looking very sad and unhappy, asked her the reason. The old woman replied, "Last year I lost my husband. Now my eldest son is ill at home, and I am afraid he is going to die, and I am taking this medicine to see if it will do him any good." "Ah," replied the shopman's wife, "I am sorry for you. I wish I could help you. If you want the words that comfort men's hearts, go to the Gospel Hall across the way there. They have the words that comfort men's hearts."

3. *The captives.*—The description grows denser. These are more needy than even the broken-hearted. They are the victims of habit, evil habit, ill-regulated deeds settling or settled down into an ill-regulated life. If women, they are such as St. Paul describes (2 Tim. iii. 6), "silly women laden with sins, led captive with divers lusts."

The word does not describe those whose condition is a woeful one by reason of bonds and imprisonment. It has nothing to do with either gaol or dungeon. By paying attention to the exact significance of the original meaning we shall best know how to interpret the Hebrew. The term means literally "those carried off as booty." It depicts what must have been one of the bitterest moments in the experience of the prisoner of war, the moment when the power of the conqueror dragged him away from home and native city, when he saw for the last time loved walls and

[1] A. T. Burbridge.

ways and faces without which life was without joy. Thus, as generally used, it denotes the ever present bitterness of the enslaved among strange faces in a strange country; the sad memories, the troublous longings which would haunt him even when the treatment he experienced was the kindest and his lot was of the easiest and pleasantest.

¶ Crouched in the corner of every house sat a thing, without home, without rights, without hope, called the slave; the victim of every caprice, the safety-valve of every passion, the tool of every lust. The work of construction Christianity wrought out. It restored the family life by restoring the marriage relation. It made every Christian home a retreat where purity might repose in the bosom of order. It created that type of Christian gentleness which we see in our mothers and sisters and wives. It touched the brow and heart of the slave—not just snapping the chains and then leading him forth to a freedom he could not use. It first touched the slave's soul, and taught him to raise his branded brow, and to know that he was a free man, that Christ had made free—free from the yoke of sin, and therefore free one day to walk as king.[1]

4. *Them that are bound.*—The proper and more general sense of the verb *'asāv* is "to bind," but in its special sense as applied to prisoners the original meaning seems to have faded out. The history of the word presents us with an excellent illustration of the elasticity of the Hebrew language. In earliest times one can understand how "a prisoner" and "a bound-man" were synonymous terms. But when arrangements for confining a person guilty of some offence were rendered more secure, the bonds might be dispensed with and a man might be shut up in prison without being pinioned. However, the old word was still used, and such a man was known as *'āsīr*, literally "one bound," properly "a prisoner." The place where he was confined was known as "the house of the bound," "the prison house." Illustrations of this can be found in the histories of Joseph and of Samson (Gen. xl. 3 and xxxix. 20; Judg. xvi. 21). A reference to the context will make it clear that though referred to as *'āsīr* Joseph and Samson were evidently not pinioned. But, while losing its old significance, *'āsīr* gathered about itself a fresh meaning. One of the most dreadful horrors of the prison house was its darkness, and, if this were not

[1] Archbishop Alexander, *Primary Convictions.*

absolute, its sunless gloom. Thus the word came to signify a prisoner, as one to whom light was denied. In several passages "prisoners" are classed in the same category with "the blind" and "them that sit in darkness" (Isa. xlii. 7, xlix, 9; Ps. cxlvi. 7, 8). It is evident that it would be a mistake to adhere strictly to the original significance of the word. The literal meaning "the bound" is no longer applicable, and there must be substituted for it, as characteristic of "the prisoner," "one who is longing for the light." In the interpretation of Isa. lxi. 1, it is quite possible that even the idea expressed in the term "the prisoner" may be dismissed, and only the broader significance of "one who is longing for the light" retained.

It is their eyes that are bound. And so these are in worst case of all, for they cannot see their condition. They are as good as dead—dead in trespasses and sins. "She that liveth in sin is dead while she liveth." When Lazarus came forth from the tomb his face was bound about with a napkin, for that was the way they did with the dead. The eyes were closed and bound. These are they who say, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," and do not *know* that they are "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."

A spirit lay bound in a house of clay,
Closed to the light of God alway,
Dark with the gloom of mortal sin,—
Earth without and a Spirit within.

But how can Earth with Spirit agree?
Or Death with Immortality?

There moved a Form in the shadows dim,
And a tender radiance flowed from Him;
But the light disclosed in the prison cell
Ignorance, Pride, and Hate as well.

His voice was sweet, and soft, and low,
And the poor dumb Spirit loved it so;
But Ignorance, Pride, and Hate unite,
To drown the voice, and hide the light.

O who will set the Spirit free,
And save her from the hideous three?

The Light has pierced the gloom of sin,
The Word has silenced the strife and din,
The Saviour has broken the house of clay,
And borne the ransomed Spirit away.

O hidden Life! O Christ within!
Break Thou the fetters of my sin!
My soul from mortal limits free
And bear me up to Heaven with Thee.[1]

II.

The Message.

The message is determined by the audience. It is fitted to be good tidings to each class, each person.

1. To the poor and needy it is simply a *Gospel*. What they need most is hope. It is the hopelessness of the poor that is the most striking, the most characteristic thing about them. Watch the faces of the tramps—they are all hopeless. This is a message of hope. And it is a hope that does not die out, "that maketh not ashamed." To poor shepherds, working lads, came the first Gospel sermon: "To you is born this day a Saviour." Jesus is a Saviour from hopelessness.

(1) First of all, this Gospel goes to the very root of the matter, in its cause and in its history. "Know you certainly that it is God's visitation." It is the will of God that you should be poor. Suppose that your poverty be even the result of folly, misconduct, or sin, still it is now, for you, the will of God. There is repose, there is satisfaction, at once. Whatever second causes have been at work—sickness or misfortune, wrong-doing of another, wrong-doing of your own—this, to-day, in fact, is the will of God concerning you; poverty—poverty as a providence, or else poverty as a chastisement. It is the will of God.

(2) Again, the Gospel of Jesus Christ says this to me. The life that is, is the mere porch and vestibule of the life that shall be. I must walk by faith. I must claim and I must practise already that equality of being which is mine, in God's

[1] H. Marwick.

sight, not only with the greatest of earth's heroes, but even with just men already made perfect. These distinctions of birth and rank, of fortune and station, are absolutely unrecognised in heaven. It is difficult, I know, to see it so: it is of the very nature of these inequalities to strut and parade themselves; it is natural to us, it is even our duty, to feel and to own these varieties below; it is a part of Christian virtue to order myself lowly and reverently towards those who are here above me. But let mine be a willing subordination—willing, because it is also erect, independent, dignified. Let me live already as one whose citizenship is in heaven—whose fellow-citizens are saints and angels, the souls of the faithful here, the spirits of the righteous in glory. There is no degradation in that poverty which, within a few years, will be transfigured and recreated into glory.[1]

2. It heals the broken-hearted. Macbeth said to the physician, "Canst thou not minister to a *mind* diseased?" and the physician answered, No. This Physician can bind up a broken heart, can heal a wounded spirit. He came as a Physician to the sick. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I came to call sinners." He healed the "woman that was a sinner," broken-hearted perhaps through men's sins. He healed Zacchæus, whose extortions had broken others' hearts, and sent him to restore what yet was in his power.

¶ A great thinker has said that Christianity first taught man the reverence for things beneath him. It is profoundly true. The Spirit of Christ can say distinctively, "He hath sent *me* to bind the broken heart." It has come through other channels for other purposes, but through this channel it has had but one purpose. Sometimes its mission has been to teach me God's majesty, sometimes to reveal His beauty, sometimes to proclaim His law. But here in the heart of Jesus the mission of the Spirit is to show me a new exhibition of God's power—His power of infinite stooping.[2]

3. It is a message of liberty to the captives. Jesus did not loose any one's chain, so far as we know, when He was on earth.

[1] C. J. Vaughan. [2] G. Matheson.

He sent John's messengers back to John in prison, not with a message to open the prison door, but with "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." But He gave liberty to the captive in sin. He said to the paralytic, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." He did more than break the chains of sin for the moment. He set in a large place, gave liberty to go in and out, victory over the very temptation that it became no temptation longer. He brought His banished home again, with the Father's welcome and the Son's place.

¶ I do not know whether you generally read the daily newspaper. I think we might get up a "Society for the Suppression of Useless Knowledge." A great deal that appears in the newspapers amounts only to that, and much time is wasted thereon; but sometimes we get a gem amongst the news, and to my mind there was a gem contained in a Reuter's telegram from Rio Janeiro, 10th May:—"The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies has voted the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery in Brazil."[1]

¶ The island of Capri in the Bay of Naples is a very tiny island, only about three and a half miles square. But it is a very beautiful island, for small though it is, it has upon it two mountains, connected with each other by a ridge or saddle. And the sides of these mountains are covered with gardens and trees. There are orange trees and lemons and olives and vines. And the air in the summer time is heavy with the sweet fragrance they send forth. There are remains also upon the island of Roman villas and baths and temples. And on one side of the island is a wonderful grotto, which can be reached only from the sea.

Now if we were in the island of Capri on Easter morning we might see a very curious sight. Rising early, we should climb the long flight of steps that lead upward from the shore, past the quaint old houses, by the vineyards and the orange groves, until we reached the church. There we should find a crowd of people waiting; dark-eyed boys and girls with jet black hair; women wearing the many-coloured costume of the island; men with their faces sunburnt from their daily exposure to the rays of the hot, fierce sun.

By and by there comes the priest, with the boy acolytes behind him, chanting as they come. First they enter the church, where they hold a service; then, after a while, they reappear outside the church, and people and priests and boys all stand together on the great open square in front, with the wide sea below and the great broad dome of the blue sky above. But

[1] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1894, p. 349.

what are those people carrying in their hands? Cages. And what are in the cages? Birds. Let us watch. See, there is a signal given. What does it mean? The doors of the cages are being opened; and the men, or the boys, or the girls who hold them are putting in their hands. And now they are taking out the birds. They must be about to set them free. And so they are. Another moment and there is a little cloud of birds just above the people's heads, and in another the birds which a minute ago were captives in their cages are flying upward, here and there and everywhere, into the wide sky beyond. They, every one of them, are free. This is what may be seen every Easter morning on the island of Capri, and it may be seen also, I believe, in other places, especially in Russia.[1]

> Conquering kings their titles take
> From the foes they captive make.
> Jesus by a nobler deed
> From the thousands He hath freed.

4. And it is a message of the opening of the eyes to the blind. None of Christ's miracles astonished more than His making the blind to see; none cost Him more. In the spiritual sphere it verges on the impossible. The blindness of ignorance is removable: we are to blame if we do not remove that. But who so blind as he that will not see? Whose eyes are so hard to open as theirs who say, "we see," while yet their sin remaineth? But the things which are impossible with men are possible with God. This Worker is anointed for His work. Therefore He has the Spirit, and the Spirit will stay with Him till his work is done—even to the opening of the eyes of the blind.

> Lo! the light cometh that shall never cease;
> Soon shall the veil be lifted; be at peace!
> Light, and more light, shines from the eternal shore,
> Light of the life that dieth nevermore.[2]

III.

The Preacher.

In a dialogue between a Christian and a Jew, which was written in the beginning of the second century, but published in

[1] J. Byles, *The Boy and the Angel*, p. 191. [2] Walter C. Smith.

English only a few years ago (*Expos.* 5th ser. v. 302, 443), the Christian quotes this prophecy of Isaiah, upon which the Jew remarks, "All this is to be in the future, though the time is not yet." That is the Jew's admission of the extraordinary wealth of promise this prophecy contains. He does not acknowledge Jesus Christ, but he sees that no one else has yet come to fulfil it. We acknowledge Jesus Christ. We know that He took this sermon and made it His. We believe that

> He comes the broken hearts to bind,
> The bleeding souls to cure;
> And with the treasures of His grace
> To enrich the humble poor.

The majority of people do not think of Christ as a great preacher. They look at Him as a man of supreme love, gentleness of spirit, kindness of manner, and as thoroughly good and unselfish in all He did; but they do not think of Him as possessing the qualities which we think necessary to make what we call a great preacher. The wonderful gift of language, the skilful choice of words, the ability to gather His arguments and focus His thought so as to carry His audience to the point of decision, most people, I say, do not thus think of Christ. When the great preachers of history are named, people speak of Brooks, Beecher, Finney, and Edwards in America; Spurgeon, Chalmers, Whitefield, and Wesley in Britain; Luther, Savonarola, and Chrysostom of the old world. But did you ever hear any one put Christ in this category?

1. That Christ was a great preacher is evident from our text, for the requisites, which all concede as necessary, are here set forth as being in His possession.

(1) First, He had the right qualification for His work, namely, the anointing of the Holy Spirit. "The Lord hath anointed me to preach." Christ received this special qualification at the time of His baptism, with the declaration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It was this anointing for the work that gave Christ His power. The account in Luke closes with the suggestive sentence, "His word was with power," and immediately following the text occurs the

statement, "And they wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth."

The fact that Christ's earthly life became effectual through the ministry of the Holy Spirit within Him, and not alone through the inherent virtue and power He brought with Him from His pre-existent state, has become one of the commonplaces of theology; and yet how little do we realise its true import, and cultivate that humility and dependence of soul which would distinguish us if the great truth were ever in view! In spite of our formal adhesion to this doctrine, it seems still strange to us that one whom we think of as holy and Divine should be indebted at every stage of His earthly life to that inward mystic ministry which is so necessary to us because of our sinfulness. We speak of the Holy Ghost as a Deliverer from inbred corruption, and are ready to assume, quite unwarrantably, that where there is no corruption in the nature, the stimulating forces and fervours of His benign indwelling are needless. We are accustomed to look upon this ministry, which perpetuates in our souls the saving work of the Lord Jesus, as though it were a special antidote to human depravity only. For the Spirit to abide moment by moment with Jesus Christ, and work in His humanity, seems like painting the lily, gilding fine gold, and bleaching the untrampled snow.

But that is a mistaken view. When the universal Church shall have been built up and consecrated to its high uses, it will be "by the Spirit" that God will dwell in the temple. And the temple of Christ's sacred flesh needed this same indwelling presence. It was imperative that to the Son in His humiliation the Father should give the Spirit, and give Him, too, upon no grudging scale—give Him for His own sake as well as for ours, whom He came to represent and to save. The great Sanctifier blends the essential forces of His personality into this divinest type of goodness, to show that goodness in even the only begotten Son is not self-originated. In the less mature stages of Christ's expanding humanity implicit and docile dependence on this inward leading was the test of His entire acceptability to the Father.

(2) He had also the second requisite of a preacher, whose sermon must always be about Christ. Christ's sermon in Nazareth was about Himself. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon *me*, He

has sent *me*." The personal pronoun runs through all He has to say. The subject of His discourse was, in a word, Himself. Just after the resurrection, when Christ was on the road to Emmaus with two of the disciples, we are told that, "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the thing concerning *Himself*." Again, He said: "I am the Vine." "I am the Resurrection and the Life." "I am the Son of God." "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

More than that, Christ's sermon was Himself. He gave His life a ransom, His soul an offering for sin. That day this Scripture was fulfilled. He preached the sermon in Nazareth by anticipation; for He delighted to do the Father's will,—and it was as good as done already, even to the last agony.

¶ I once heard a prayer of a rough ploughman in a village schoolroom; and this was in his prayer—"Dear Lord, if there be any poor stricken one in this room to-night, come and bind him up, and bind Thyself, Lord, into the binding."[1]

2. It is because Christ *is* this sermon, not because He preached it, that the prophet could preach it, and that we can preach it now. The Cross of Christ looks before and after. One arm stretches backward and gives this prophet the right to preach a sermon he has no power himself to fulfil; the other stretches forward and gives the same right to us. For the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by time or circumstance. As the prophet spoke, the Cross of Christ was already raised in His sight, and it stands erected in His sight to-day.

Thus the preacher can say, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon *me*, because he hath anointed *me* to preach glad tidings to the meek." This is his work. It is a special work. Like every work for which one is anointed, it is honourable and glorious. He has been chosen to accomplish it. And *because* he has been chosen to accomplish this work, the Spirit of the Lord will be with him as long as he gives himself to its accomplishment.

¶ The question very naturally arises, if one of the offices of Christ was that of physician, and He healed the sick and made the lame to walk, and gave sight to the blind, will He not do these same things to-day? In other words, it is asked, have we not here Scripture which supports the theory known as Divine

[1] J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, viii., No. 729.

healing, or faith cure? Christ undoubtedly could heal the sick to-day, and give sight to the blind, just as much as when He was here upon earth, for He has the same power now that He had then. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." But what He *can* do and what He *will* do are two different things, and while many would willingly concede that He could do these things, yet most Christians believe that He will not now work miracles of physical restoration.

The reason for this is that such miracles are not needed. God *could* inspire men to prophecy, but the probability is that He will not. Simply because Christ has come, the acme of all prophecy has been fulfilled, and the necessity does not now exist. So God *could* inspire men to write a Bible, for He has the same power as when He spoke to Isaiah, and Paul, and James; but the probability is that He will not thus inspire men to-day, for we have a Bible, and such inspired writings are not needed. On the same basis do we believe that Divine healing is not to be expected in present times. The purpose of Christ's physical miracles was to support His authority as a spiritual healer. He restored the sight of the blind that the world might be more easily convinced that He had the power to heal spiritual blindness. He bound up the broken-hearted that people might be taught to trust Him as the physician of the soul.

THE LORD'S REMEMBRANCERS.

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The Lord's Remembrancers.

Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, take ye no rest, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.—lxii. 6, 7.

The second half of Isaiah's prophecies forms one great whole, which might be called "The Book of the Servant of the Lord." One majestic figure stands forth on its pages with ever-growing clearness of outline and form. The language in which He is described fluctuates at first between the collective Israel and the one Person who is to be all that the nation had failed to attain. But even near the beginning of the prophecy we read of "My servant whom I uphold," whose voice is to be low and soft, and whose meek persistence is not to fail till He have set judgment in the earth. And as we advance the reference to the nation becomes less and less possible, and the recognition of the person more and more imperative. At first the music of the prophetic song seems to move uncertainly amid sweet sounds, from which the true theme by degrees emerges, and thenceforward recurs over and over again with deeper, louder harmonies clustering about it, till it swells into the grandeur of the choral close.

In the chapter before our text we read, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek." Throughout the remainder of the prophecy, with the exception of one section which contains the prayer of the desolate Israel, this same person continues to speak; and who he is was taught in the synagogue of Nazareth. Whilst the preceding chapter, then, brings in Christ as proclaiming the great work of deliverance for which He is anointed of God, the following chapter presents Him as treading the winepress alone, which is a symbol of the future judgment by the glorified Saviour. Between these two prophecies of the

earthly life and of the still future judicial energy, this chapter of our text lies, referring, as I take it, to the period between these two—that is, to all the ages of the Church's development on earth. For these Christ here promises His continual activity, and His continual bestowment of grace to His servants who watch the walls of His Jerusalem.[1]

I.

THE LORD'S REMEMBRANCERS.

"Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers."

It is hardly possible not to linger a little over this curious appellation, "The Lord's remembrancers," given in the margin of the Authorized Version and in the text of the Revised. Several interpretations of it have been suggested. The original word itself has both the ordinary meaning of one who reminds another, and a technical meaning (2 Sam. xx. 24) akin to, though not identical with, that of the English word. By some it is applied to the angels, who are also supposed to be the "watchmen" upon the walls, referred to in the preceding clause. But such an explanation lifts the passage entirely out of the sphere of human privilege and duty, and introduces into it allusions to matters about which very little is known. There may be in it a special reference to prophets, whose functions would naturally include that of leading the people in their supplications to God, as well as that of warning them of danger and inciting them to effort. But there is no need to confine the term to officials of any kind. The entire New Testament is a sufficient authority for applying it to all true Christians.

¶ If indeed there be truth in the tradition, in Judaism itself it was recognised in part of the sacrificial ritual that every man could be and ought to be the Lord's remembrancer. The forty-fourth Psalm describes some of the marvellous things done by Jehovah for Israel in the past, and the forsaken and oppressed condition of Israel in the present; and one of its closing verses is said to have been regularly sung for long in the Temple worship—the one in which Jehovah's remembrancers, after having reminded Him of their need and of His promised help, call upon Him:

[1] A. Maclaren, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 19.

"Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise, cast us not off for ever." John Hyrcanus is reported to have abolished that custom, in spleen at the refusal of the Pharisees to let him reign in peace; or, possibly, according to a more charitable conjecture, under the feeling that the idea of awakening and reminding Jehovah involves a defect of faith. The psalm, however, is entirely true to human nature. For when men are tempted to imagine themselves forsaken of God and begirt inextricably by perils, it is an immense stimulus and encouragement of faith to remind God of their needs and of His promises, of their present reliance upon Him, and even (for Scripture warrants it elsewhere) of the way in which His faithfulness and honour are concerned in their protection and deliverance.[1]

¶ The remembrancer's priestly office belongs to every member of Christ's priestly kingdom, the lowest and least of whom has the privilege of unrestrained entry into God's presence-chamber and the power of blessing the world by faithful prayer. What should we think of a citizen in a beleagured city, who saw the enemy mounting the very ramparts, and gave no alarm because that was the sentry's business? In such extremity every man is a soldier, and women and children can at least keep watch and raise shrill shouts of warning. The gifts then here promised, and the duties that flow from them, are not the prerogatives or the tasks of any class or order, but the heritage and the burden of the Lord to every member of the Church.

1. How distinctly these words of our text define the region within which our prayers should ever move, and the limits which bound their efficacy! They *remind* God. Then the truest prayer is that which bases itself on God's uttered will, and the desires which are born of our own fancies or heated enthusiasms have no power with Him. The prayer that prevails is a reflected promise. Our office in prayer is but to receive on our hearts the bright rays of His word, and to flash them back from the polished surface to the heaven from whence they came.

¶ It is said that Philip of Macedon, lest he should be unduly exalted by his earthly greatness, or puffed up by the adulation of his subjects, instructed certain of his officers every morning as he woke to whisper in his ear, "Remember, sire, you are but a man." They were his remembrancers, keeping in his mind what he knew well but chose to be reminded of continually.

2. This quaint word, "remembrancer," leads you to expect

[1] R. W. Moss, *The Discipline of the Soul*, p. 160.

to see some old guild in curious and ancient form. Let us look at them at work. And it is a testimony to the antiquity of this wonderful guild, with its strange power coming down from the distant past, that we must begin with Abraham. A guilty city is lying beneath the ban of God; but one of the Lord's remembrancers comes forward, and he says, "If fifty righteous be found here; if forty righteous—if thirty righteous—if twenty—if ten?" "I will not destroy it for ten's sake." Or, again, a battle is raging in the plain; but above the battle on the hill another of the Lord's remembrancers holds up his hands—"and when Moses held up his hand Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed." Or there is a plague among the people; they are dying by thousands. Another of the Lord's remembrancers puts on incense, and runs in between—exactly what the word intercede means—runs in between the living and the dead; and the plague is stayed. I ask you, as thinking men and women, would it be possible to explain these passages in any other way than this, that the Lord's remembrancers have power put into their hands to move the hands which move the universe?[1]

¶ Jacob prayed in that way, when he trembled at the thought of his brother's possible rage, pleading God's actual words of promise: "O God of my fathers, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee . . . Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother . . . for (again) thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea." Two remembrancings, and between them a little prayer; and of course the result was that, when Esau came, instead of pouring his rough followers upon the struggling and indefensible caravan, he "fell on his brother's neck and kissed him." David was surprised and almost staggered in unbelief at the prospect of greatness and renown which the prophet Nathan opened up to him, but he recovered and fed his faith by reminding himself and his God of the promise, and prayed, "Now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said." In this very prophecy Israel first of all reminds Jehovah of what He has been wont to do, and what needs to be done now: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations

[1] A. F. W. Ingram, *Banners of the Christian Faith*, p. 82.

of old." The result is seen in vision at once: "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion"; and so all the watchmen lift up their voices: "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem: the Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."[1]

3. Is this some privilege which men used to have, but which they have now lost? Read the New Testament and see. "We are become kings and priests to God," or, as it should be, "a kingdom of priests." "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and God shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." Do we look out upon the harvest of the world and see very few labourers going into the harvest? What are we to do? "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest." Is it not certain that if those words have any meaning, quite apart from the help we give others by speaking to them, by giving them help in their hour of need, there is a Divine power put into our hands to bring to them help by our intercession? Did the early Christians believe this? Were they the Lord's remembrancers? Peter is in prison, and the Christian cause has thus received a terrible blow. What do they do? The Lord's remembrancers get together, and prayer is made continually in the Church unto God for him. Peter is free. Paul is in prison. To what does he look? He says, "I beseech you that ye strive continuously in your prayers for me." And from that day to this mothers plead for their sons, priests plead for their people, and people plead for their priests. The Lord's remembrancers have given Him no rest, and taken no rest until He establish, until He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.[2]

Does not the efficacy of *intercessory* prayer rest on the same principle of moral government as the efficacy of vicarious suffering? Does it not assume that, in dealing with one moral being, God may properly take into account the action of other

[1] R. W. Moss, *The Discipline of the Soul*, p. 161.
[2] A. F. W. Ingram, *Banners of the Christian Faith*, p. 83.

moral beings, associated with that one, and interested in his welfare?[1]

¶ There were two working men some years ago who were disputing in their workshop. One, who was a little man and without much brain power, was standing up for the Christian cause; the other was a clever, able workman, who kept challenging him to come into any room or any hall, and he would prove the falsity of the Christian faith. The little one, who was not clever, simply said this, "I cannot argue with you, brother, but I shall never cease to pray for you, that some day you may see things as I do." Years passed by, and that man who scoffed at the Christian faith is a communicant of the Church of England. He was with me last night, and is this afternoon in this cathedral, and if I were to call him up here he would tell you that he now searches the streets where he used to work to find that man to whose never-ceasing prayers he attributes his conversion, in order to give him the happiness of knowing that his year-long prayer has been heard.[2]

II.

TAKING NO REST.

"Take ye no rest" (marg. "Keep not silence").

Simply to call God to remembrance does not exhaust the human conditions of our own perfecting and of the Church's progress and strength. Two other conditions are singled out to emphasise their necessity: "Take ye no rest, and give him no rest"—unresting activity on our part, and ceaselessness of prayer: those together are the means of moving the mighty will of Jehovah, the double-edged sword whose wielding is fatal to all the powers of evil.

The words "Take ye no rest" or "Keep not silence" are an encouragement against weariness in well-doing, against the creeping paralysis of doubt, and against the bitter ineffectiveness of despondency. They are an encouragement to earnestness both in worship and in work.

1. *Weariness.*—We shall "keep silence" if we grow weary in well-doing; if patience gives place to fretfulness, and love of ease cries out against the practice of self-denial; if the crown

[1] A. Hovey, *Manual of Christian Theology*, p. 262.
[2] A. F. W. Ingram, *Banners of the Christian Faith*, p. 84.

is longed for while the cross is shunned, and the reaping is desired while the sowing is neglected. But I trust we shall not thus belie our character. Shame, indeed, if the Lord's remembrancers are themselves reminded in vain. Shame, indeed, if in keeping silence we make it easier for other voices to be heard. Shame, indeed, if we prove ourselves sluggards and not sons, hirelings and not true servants. But "I am persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation."

¶ There is a legend of a monk, called "Brother Francis," whose duty it was to carry the water to be used in the monastery from St. Mary's well. The way was long, the work was toilsome, and Francis was discontented; though only God knew how unwilling his daily service was. One evening, when he had been brooding sullenly over his hard lot and wishing he might never be forced to do the work again, the Abbot began unexpectedly to praise him. He was told that his zeal and patience in bringing fresh water several times a day would be rewarded by God; but that he looked very weary, so the work would now be given into the hands of Brother Paul. Brother Francis, confused and ashamed, accepted the Abbot's blessing; but with envious glance he watched his successor as he carried the water from the distant spring, day after day.

And rest from toil seemed unto him a sore and bitter thing,
A penance, lacking penance' grace—no sweetness, but all sting.
And pondering sadly, half in wrath, and half repentingly,
He had a vision, and he saw an Angel from on high
Who, hour by hour, with Brother Paul, walked all the weary day,
And every footstep reckoned up along the sunny way,
And seemed to joy when labour grew; yea, seemed full glad indeed,
As more and more of water fresh the thirsty Brethren need.[1]

2. *Doubt.*—Nothing so effectually seals the lips of testimony, stops the note of praise, and hushes the voice of prayer. A cheerful trust in God is necessary in those who seek to bring Him to the remembrance of others. If faith is the hand which lays hold of Christ, so is it the voice which speaks of Him. "Weave truth with trust" is an old motto we may lay to heart. Possessed of the "accent of conviction," there will be no keeping silence, but afflicted with the lock-jaw of doubt there will be

[1] Dora Farncomb, *The Vision of His Face*, p. 99.

great failure of Christian duty and great forfeiture of Christian privilege. Only the faithful heart can speak of and for the faithful God. A grain of sand in the metal will mar the music of the bell, and the presence of doubt in the worker will effectually mar the certain sound of the message expected to be clearly and constantly delivered.

Who but has seen
Once in his life, when youth and health ran high,
The fair, clear face of truth
Grow dark to his eye?
Who but has known
Cold mists of doubt and icy questionings
Creep round him like a nightmare, blotting out
The sight of better things?

A hopeless hour,
When all the voices of the soul are dumb,
When o'er the tossing seas
No light may come,
When God and right
Are gone, and seated on the empty throne
Are dull philosophies and words of wind,
Making His praise their own.

Better than this,
The burning sins of youth, the old man's greed,
Than thus to live inane;
To sit and read,
And with blind brain
Daily to treasure up a deadly doubt,
And live a life from which the light has fled,
And faith's pure fire gone out.[1]

3. *Despair.*—Despair also ministers to silence, whether it be despair of ourselves or of others. Hopefulness is as necessary as faithfulness. Our Saviour is our great example here. He often seemed to fail in His efforts to teach the disciples and gather the multitudes, but He never despaired. The hardness of men's hearts would have silenced a testimony less Divine. To repel Him was but to give Him strength for a renewal of love's attack. It will be hard to keep silence when we indulge

[1] Sir Lewis Morris.

in hopes concerning the children; and of whom may we hope more fondly and freely?

¶ It is often disheartening work. We seem like the poor widow who was not heard; we seem like the man to whom the selfish friend would not open the door. The stream of intercession trickles on, and no one seems to heed and no one seems to care. But if these things are true of which we have spoken, something does happen. Just as you dam up a stream in order to accumulate the water power, and for a long time the stream trickles on and the valley underneath remains dry and desolate; but when you look out later you find the brown things have become green again, and the dead things alive, and you wonder what it means; and you find that it means this: that the great tide of water has burst its bonds at last and is off down that valley on a work of blessing—so it is with the stream of intercession. It trickles on all the time; the power rises—slowly rises—and some day men will look out upon the world, and they will see dry souls freshened with grace, and they will see heathen lands converted, and they will wonder what it means: but we shall know that the great tide of prayer has burst its bonds at last and is off down the valley on its work of blessing.

> Man may be
> And do the thing he wishes, if he keeps
> That one thought dominant through night and day,
> And knows his strength is limitless, because
> Its fountain-head is God.[1]

4. *Earnest endeavour.*—The phrase "Take ye no rest" may be taken in its widest sense as an appeal for hopeful and confident perseverance in every kind of Christian work. There are tendencies in most men's hearts, which make such an appeal very necessary even in an age of evangelism. Disappointment with the visible results of work or with the apparent effects of self-discipline, the length of the interval which separates the harvest from the seed-time, the perfecting of the spirit from the remote moment of its conversion,—these things are sometimes apt to produce within us a degree of hesitation, often almost of suspicion, concerning religious prospects and forces, that is fatal to anything like persistent enthusiasm. And yet persistent enthusiasm, the having our spirits continually swayed or filled

[1] E. W. Wilcox, *New Thought Common Sense*, p. 238.

with the Spirit of God, is precisely that which is essential to the increase of our own strength against sin, and to the Church's triumph. That, accordingly, is the prophet's first advice, "Take ye no rest," which is equivalent to saying, Never yield to despondency whatever the temptation, but remember the grace of God, and go steadily on day by day, smiting at every kind of evil within or without, entertaining no fears, giving no quarter to sin, never resting until the battle is over and the victory finally won.

¶ We see the immense influence placed within our reach in daily life in making the life of others happy or miserable. Take that sick boy lying there down in East London. Who is it that has placed flowers by his side? Who is it to whose visit he is looking forward every minute? Who is it who has been to read to him so punctually day after day, to teach him to draw, and to help him to get through the long hours of his sickness? It is some woman who, for the love of Christ and His little ones, has given up her beautiful home in the country, and, unnoticed and unknown, spends day after day in ministering to another for whom Christ died. He has caught from her her faith; he believes now that Christ can save him because in a true sense she has saved him. If he stood on his individual base he would have died and despaired, but through his sister he lives and hopes. Oh! the band of the Lord's ministering helpers. With shining garments, to the eyes of God, they move about the world. What should we do without them?[1]

The den they enter grows a shrine;
  The gloomy sash an oriel burns;
Their cup of water warms like wine;
  Their speech is filled from heavenly urns.

About their brow to me appears
  An aureole, traced in tend'rest light—
The rainbow hue of smiles through tears,
  In dying eyes, by them made bright.

Of souls that shivered on the brink
  Of that chill ford, repass'd no more,
And in their mercy found the pledge,
  And sweetness of the farther shore.[2]

[1] Bishop Ingram.

[2] Lowell.

III.

GIVING NO REST.

"And give him no rest" (marg. "silence").

"Give Him no rest": Let there be no cessation to Him. These are bold words, which many people would not have been slow to rebuke, if they had been anywhere else than in the Bible. Those who remind God are not to suffer Him to be still. The prophet believes that they can regulate the flow of Divine energy, can stir up the strength of the Lord.

It is significant how few men there are, whatever the variety or thinness of their creed, who have not something good to say concerning what they call prayer. To its beneficial effects the witness is almost uniform. When a philosophy "falsely so called" denounces it as unreasonable, it will often confess it to be instinctive. That prayer elevates in some way and enriches the moral nature of the worshipper, is one of the conclusions that seem to be taken for granted almost everywhere, though an attempt is sometimes made to neutralise the admission by pleas of superstition or of illusion. Every Christian knows that it does infinitely more for him than that. All through the Bible God is represented as yielding to its importunity, and every sincere disciple is familiar with experiences, in which in response to his pleading God has come down to his aid. Jehovah in His righteous anger said to Moses, "Let me alone, that I may consume this people"; but when Moses prayed, reminding God of His promise to the patriarchs, the record is—"The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." "Let me go, for the day breaketh," said the mysterious man with whom Jacob wrestled at the ford Jabbok; and because Jacob would not let him go, he soon prevailed. It is the same still. To pray with that kind of resolved importunity that will not be diverted —to give God no rest until He opens His hand and pours down the influence of strength of grace we need: neither in heaven nor upon earth has that resource ever yet been found to fail.

How have I knelt with arms of my aspiring
Lifted all night in irresponsive air,

Dazed and amazed with overmuch desiring,
Blank with the utter agony of prayer![1]

1. This prayer is *intercessory* prayer. Deeper than the need of men and women, deeper than the need of money, is the Church's need to-day of the forgotten secret of prevailing intercessory prayer. Nothing short of this will suffice for the missionary enterprises of the day. Take ye no rest, and give Him no rest. Far be it from us by that to imply that we love the imperilled world more than our Father does. We sometimes tremble lest in our supplications and in our representations to God, when we kneel at His Throne together or by ourselves, we should seem to imply that there are difficulties in this business which we have fathomed but which He has not foreseen. In our grievous disappointments, when our trusted standard-bearers fall, when the work of a lifetime seems, as it were, wasted, we are apt to speak to God as if really His ways were too inscrutable for us and intended to daunt us. God forgive us if we have murmured at this, which is sometimes chastisement of our half-hearted service, or murmur at the long waiting of faithful men and women for tangible results, or at the vastness of the work which we seem to have attempted in vain.

God help us all the more to lift the whole round world, with all its freight of infinite destiny, in the arms of our faith and cast it at His feet. But we must not be afraid to tell Him that we have at length learned the lesson of the colossal magnitude of the stupendous difficulties and the deep mysteries of our task. Our Lord would have us thus learn the lesson which He taught at Gethsemane, and amid inhuman insults and cruelties of His dying hour. It is by prayer for missions, when it is deep and sincere, it is by prayer for missions more than anything else, I believe—one can speak only of what one knows oneself—it is by prayer for missions that we become partakers of the sufferings of Christ, and can understand a little of the travail of His soul.

A man may say, "I can quite understand the good of praying for oneself; I can quite see that, according to God's will,

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul*, p. 13.

these gifts of grace are to be worked by prayer like the gifts of God in nature; but where is the evidence that there is the slightest good in praying for others?" He might even take this line—he might say, "It is presumtuous for me to imagine that I can affect the destiny of another soul! It is against what I read of the struggle for existence by each individual in nature. It is unfair, for what is to happen to those for whom no one prays? And where is the evidence that intercession for others does any good at all?"

In answer to the first question, with regard to the struggle of the individual for existence, if you have read Professor Drummond's *Ascent of Man* you will have apprehended something which is a great relief to the nightmare which settles down upon the mind if one looks upon nature as a mere scene of bloodshed. I know there are men—I see men here—who have come up lately from Oxford, and I believe that at Oxford, as much as in the great centres of our population, one of the things which drive men to scepticism is believing that nature is entirely cruel. "Where," they say, "is the evidence of a good, benevolent God, in the midst of such a scene of unrelieved bloodshed?" Read Professor Drummond's book, and you will find that side by side with the struggle for existence there is going on perpetually in nature the struggle for the life of others—that the lioness who might crush her cub will die for it, that the parent bird wears itself out in getting food for its young, and that the creative—the marvellously creative—power of a mother's love is not confined to the human species. And when, secondly, we turn to the objection that intercession is unfair, and look frankly at the facts of nature, we find that the unfairness is the other way. No one can visit a children's hospital without seeing in the most touching form that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. Some people seem to imagine that that saying in the Bible is an arbitrary command imposing an arbitrary punishment on the human race; but one hour spent in that children's hospital will show that it simply states a fact of human nature.[1]

¶ What can be more beautiful than the picture which his biographer gives of George Herbert and his daily prayers? You

[1] Bishop Ingram.

will remember how he describes Herbert reading the prayers in the tiny church of Bemerton, close to Salisbury, and "how the poorer people of the parish did so love and reverence Mr. Herbert that they would let the plough rest when Mr. Herbert's Saints' Bell rang to prayers, that they might also offer their devotions to God with him, and then would return back to their plough."

¶ "Go," says the saintly Bishop Ken, "go to the house of prayer, though you go alone; and there, as you are God's remembrancers, 'keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.'"

2. We are thus encouraged both to work and to pray, both to "take no rest," and to "give Him no rest." *Activity* and *prayer*, each unceasing—that is the irresistible combination which the prophet recommends and urges: to pray (some one says) as if God had to do everything, and to work as if everything depended upon ourselves. The certain result will be our own perfecting in the praiseful confession of others whilst the Church also becomes strong and "a praise in the earth." We know, consequently, what to do in experiences that frequently recur. When we discover anew our own spiritual feebleness, there is no need to waste in depression and complaint any energy that may remain; the feebleness should be attributed at once to its right cause—that we take too much rest, or that we give God too much. On our knees, as God's remembrancers, we should remind Him of His word, "He that is feeble among you shall be as David"; and it will not be long before greater strength than David's takes possession of us. Or when the Church seems to be shorn of its power, making no headway and winning no praise, the reason is again because we Christians do not pray enough or do not work enough. It is a magnificent prospect—ourselves established so that all men confess our consistency and acknowledge our influence for good; the Church "a praise in the earth," everywhere triumphing over sin, with great crowds of men continuously streaming up to pay their homage to its Lord. Until that crowning consummation is reached, we must ourselves "take no rest and give Him no rest."

These two forms of action ought to be *inseparable*. Each, if genuine, will drive us to the other, for who could fling himself into the watchman's work, with all its solemn consequences,

knowing how weak his voice was, and how deaf the ears that should hear, unless he could bring God's might to his help? And who could honestly remind God of His promises and forget his own responsibilities? Prayerless work will soon slacken, and never bear fruit; idle prayer is worse than idle. You cannot part them if you would. How much of the busy occupation which is called "Christian work" is detected to be spurious by this simple test! How much so-called prayer is reduced by it to mere noise, no better than the blaring trumpet or the hollow drum!

¶ In the tabernacle of Israel stood two great emblems of the functions of God's people, which embodied these two sides of the Christian life. Day by day there ascended from the altar of incense the sweet odour, which symbolised the fragrance of prayer as it wreathes itself upwards to the heavens. Night by night, as darkness fell on the desert and the camp, there shone through the gloom the hospitable light of the great golden candlestick with its seven lamps, whose steady rays outburned the stars that paled with the morning. Side by side they proclaimed to Israel its destiny to be the light of the world, to be a kingdom of priests.

The offices and the honour have passed over to us, and we shall fall beneath our obligations unless we let the light shine constantly before men, and let our voice "rise like a fountain night and day" before God—even as He did who, when every man went to his own house, went alone to the Mount of Olives, and in the morning, when every man returned to his daily task, went into the Temple and taught. By His example, by His gifts, by the motive of His love, our resting, working Lord says to each of us, "Ye that remind God, keep not silence." Let us answer, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest."

3. And what is the *encouragement*? It is found in the first verse of this chapter: "I will not rest." Through all the ages His power is in exercise. He inspires in good men all their wisdom, and every grace of life and character. He uses them as His weapons in the contest of His love with the world's hatred; but the hand that forged, and tempered, and sharpened the blade is that which smites with it; and the axe must not boast itself against him that heweth. He, the Lord of lords, orders providences, and shapes the course of the world for that Church

which is His witness: "Yea, he reproved kings for their sake, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." The ancient legend which told how, on many a well-fought field, the ranks of Rome discerned through the battle-dust the gleaming weapons and white steeds of the Great Twin Brethren far in front of the solid legions, is true in loftier sense in our Holy War. We may still see the vision which the leader of Israel saw of old, the man with the drawn sword in his hand, and hear the majestic word, "As captain of the Lord's host am I now come." The Word of God, with vesture dipped in blood, with eyes alit with His flaming love, with the many crowns of unlimited sovereignty upon His head, rides at the head of the armies of heaven; "and in righteousness doth he judge and make war." For the single soul struggling with daily tasks and petty cares, His help is ever near and real, as for the widest work of the collective whole. He sends none of us tasks in which He has no share. The word of this Master is never "Go," but "Come." He unites Himself with all our sorrows, with all our efforts. "The Lord also working with them," is a description of all the labours of Christian men, be they great or small.

Nor is this all. There still remains the wonderful truth of His continuous *intercession* for us. In its widest meaning that word expresses the whole of the manifold ways by which Christ undertakes and maintains our cause. But the narrower signification of prayer on our behalf is applicable, and is in Scripture applied, to our Lord. As on earth the climax of all His intercourse with His disciples was that deep and yet simple prayer which forms the Holy of Holies of John's Gospel, so in heaven His loftiest office for us is set forth under the figure of His intercession. Before the Throne stands the slain Lamb, and therefore do the elders in the outer circle bring acceptable praises. Within the veil stands the Priest, with the names of the tribes blazing on the breastplate, and on the shoulders of His robes, near the seat of love, near the arm of power. And whatever difficulty may surround that idea of Christ's priestly intercession, this at all events is implied in it, that the mighty work which He accomplished on earth is ever present to the Divine mind as the ground of our acceptance and the channel of our blessings; and this further, that the utterance of Christ's will is ever in

harmony with the Divine purpose. Therefore His prayer has in it a strange tone of majesty, and, if we may say so, of command, as of one who knows that He is ever heard: "I *will* that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

¶ The instinct of the Church has, from of old, laid hold of an event in His early life to shadow forth this great truth, and has bid us see a pledge and a symbol of it in that scene on the Lake of Galilee: the disciples toiling in the sudden storm, the poor little barque tossing on the waters tinged by the wan moon, the spray dashing over the wearied rowers. They seem alone, but up yonder, in some hidden cleft of the hills, their Master looks down on all the weltering storm, and lifts His voice in prayer. Then when the need is sorest, and the hope least, He comes across the waves, making their surges His pavement, and using all opposition as the means of His approach, and His presence brings calmness, and immediately they are at land.

So we have not only to look back to the Cross, but up to the Throne. From the Cross we hear a voice, "It is finished." From the Throne a voice, "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest." [1]

IV.

THE ESTABLISHING OF THE CHURCH.

"Till He establish Jerusalem."

Jerusalem, the city of God, of necessity represents the people of God, first of all as an organised whole, and then in the separate individuals that constitute the whole. The chapter accordingly sets before us, as one of the objects towards which God is working, an established Church, the object of universal praise. The word "established" is the prophet's, and must not be taken in the sense in which it is used in a standing ecclesiastical dispute. Concerning that dispute, indeed, neither the prophet nor Scripture anywhere has much directly to say, and certainly here the meaning does not go beyond the ordinary idea of making the Church steadfast, firm, strong. To a large extent it answers that description already, notwithstanding the doubt and hesitancy or the cynical rejoicing of those who cannot see through the controversial smoke that envelops it. It has been compared to a great light-

[1] A. Maclaren, *Paul's Prayers*, p. 27.

house, directing men to safety, played about by storm and foam, whose misty quiverings seem at times to make it quiver, yet standing immovable upon its foundation of rock, and surviving unharmed the malice of all the elements.

If ever the victorious power of His Church seems to be almost paling to defeat, and His servants to be working no deliverance upon the earth, the cause is not to be found in Him, who is "without variableness," nor in His gifts, which are "without repentance," but solely in us, who let go our hold of the eternal might. No ebb withdraws the waters of that great ocean; and if sometimes there be sand and ooze where once the flashing flood brought life and motion, it is because careless warders have shut the sea gates.

The hindrances in the way of the establishing of the Church are chiefly uncertainty of revelation, and the worldly and selfish forces which disregard the claims of God.

1. We are told that in some Christian creeds there are points where the creed conflicts with reason, and where the supremacy of reason must be maintained; that no support can be found for the prescribed moral usages either in the fundamental principles of human nature or in an adequate authority outside of it; that some of the ceremonials of religion are destitute of dignity, inwardness, art, and have ceased to be in any way the expression or the product of life. The verdict of impossibility is at times pronounced over the contents of the Bible in the name of physical science, or its arrangement and inspiration are assailed in the name of historical criticism. All this certainly does not at first sight and upon the surface look like establishment. On the contrary, by some men it is held to be a proof of failure, whilst others regard it with suspicion as an evidence at least of weakness, and are tempted to turn from passages of this kind with the exulting or the sad conclusion, that both the Scriptures and the religion to which they minister are moribund and decaying, that little further advantage from them in regard to morals or to human well-being can reasonably be expected.

But that conclusion is too hasty, unwarranted by the experience of the past, inconsistent with principles that never consent to be ignored, and with manifest tendencies in the drift of human

thought and opinion. For if the extreme supernaturalism of our fathers is gradually becoming a little discredited, and the number is decreasing of those who are prepared to exalt the merely unintelligible into the miraculous, the testimony of consciousness on the other hand is in all probability accepted to-day more widely, and invested with a higher authority, than at any previous period. It is a shifting and redisposition of the evidences of faith and morals—disturbing to the most reverent minds, and dangerous to some; but it is a shifting which promises to make the foundation in human thought of religion and of the moral sentiments more solid and unassailable than ever. Similarly with the appearance of weakness which the Bible is supposed to be taking on amidst the processes of historical criticism through which it is passing. Not only is it a distinct advantage to the thoughtful disciple to have sometimes "to breast the bracing air of opposition, and to join in the fight of faith where all are striving for what they honestly believe to be true," but there is really no need to regard these modern investigations, at least as they are pursued in most cases in this country, with suspicion either of unfriendliness or of danger. The man who of all scholars of the land is perhaps the most completely in sympathy with them, and most deeply committed to their methods and results, writes that "there is a message from God to man in every part of the Bible," and that the condition of discovering the message is that the reason be "stimulated to its highest activity by spiritual influences."

2. Again, many are loudly telling us that Christianity is a myth, and others that it is only one among many religions which are leading humanity on to a distant goal; that science and Western civilisation are to do the work that the Churches once did. And we are told that the value of the human soul is a vanishing quantity, and that God is a human emotion, and immortal life a dream. And without accepting these moanings from the sunless gulfs of doubt as the real truth of things, many people are flagging in their enthusiasm for the conversion of the world because of them; they become paralysed and heart-sick, and they relax effort. It is in prayer, in living union with Christ, that all this pessimism vanishes like a nightmare, and we start

to the post of duty again. You cannot fight the atmosphere; no, but you can rise above it.

Then thro' the mid complaint of my confession,
Then thro' the pang and passion of my prayer,
Leaps with a start the shock of his possession,
Thrills me and touches, and the Lord is there.

Scarcely I catch the words of his revealing,
Hardly I hear him, dimly understand,
Only the Power that is within me pealing
Lives on my lips and beckons to my hand.

Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound nor doubt him nor deny:
Yea with one voice, O world, tho' thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.[1]

V.

MAKING THE CHURCH A PRAISE.

And till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

The promise that Jerusalem will be made a praise in the earth, prophet after prophet repeats, sometimes calling to his aid every kind of beautiful imagery, and sometimes pointing to the cause of the praise in the presence of the Holy One of Israel. Zephaniah, for instance, a prophet of royal descent, the traditions of whose house were full alike of suffering and of privilege, closes his short prophecy with a vivid bit of dramatisation. First of all, he addresses his fellow-citizens: "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God is in the midst of thee, a mighty one who will save: he will rejoice over thee with joy." And then his own voice ceases, in order that the One whose every tone is authority may be heard: "At that time will I bring you in, and at that time will I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth." It is much the same with Isaiah himself. "As the earth bringeth forth her bud" (he says), "and as the garden

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul*, p. 49.

causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." The earth in all the glories of her luxuriant herbage, every plant and every tree breaking forth into the promise of fruitfulness, all nature putting on her garments of beauty and power—that, he says, is a symbol of what God will make the Church in the world to be.

1. *Christ.*—That promise holds good still; and its growing fulfilment may be traced in the ever-growing disposition to exhaust all praise upon Him who is the Church's Head and Lord, the source of its strength and the centre of its worship. In every age since He died, He has been praised in proportion as He has been known; and in the records of no race that has heard of Him, with one certain and another doubtful exception, is any other name more highly honoured. Even that exceptional race is moderating at present the expression of its hatred, and beginning to confess with hesitation the human ascendancy of the Nazarene. By all the world beside He has been singled out for unexampled praise. To the best men of old He was the mirror of every grace and virtue. One of the most lauded philosophies has "abstracted His qualities from His personality," and now bids the world worship their impersonal generalisation. And whatever other direction is being taken by human thought within the Church or in its immediate borders, it is, at least, taxing all its resources in order to pour increased praise upon the Saviour.

2. *The Church.*—It is true that the Church itself is not equally praised, but that is as a rule because its practice does not follow the example or come up to the standard of its Lord. As the days pass, the Spirit of Christ will ever more completely sway it, and determine its relations with the world; and thus its vitality and religious force will vindicate themselves, its critics will join the swelling ranks of worshippers, and it will become "a praise in the earth."

3. *The Christian.*—If all this is to be done for the Church, it must be that it will be done for each of the Christians who compose it. Accordingly, every follower of Christ has a right to regard this passage as a promise of God to establish him, to make him strong in discipleship, faith, power against sin—to

make him "a praise in the earth." At the present time there is probably no Christian worthy the name, who is not constantly discovering, and often groaning in secret almost hopelessly over the discovery, how weak and unestablished he is. Temptation, however small, has but to assail us subtly or suddenly, and we become an easy prey. When we begin to search our own spirits, and try to find out what we really are, a conclusion that is not satisfactory or pleasant is forced upon us. Self, not crucified and slain, but even exacting in its demands for indulgence; ill-tempered, irritable, resentful, vindictive; able sometimes to turn out poor work without compunction; conscious of sinfulness, which we treat with alternating indifference and remorse, but to be rid of which we make few serious and prolonged efforts; sometimes not caring much even to keep the surface of our lives correct, still less to sweep out of our hearts the rout of foul passions, or to silence the strife of low motives —that, or something like that, is the account we are disposed to give of ourselves in some of our moods; and anything like the final mastery of sin, or unwavering firmness in our allegiance to Christ, is apt to seem for ever impossible. Yet that it is impossible, the whole Bible and all godly experience testify.

That man will find sin obstinate, inveterate, indwelling, slow to confess itself beaten, is precisely in accordance with the implication of Scripture, which proceeds to repeat and urge the assurance that the grace of God will secure for man victory in the end. Establishment so firm that we need neither yield to temptation nor waver in faith, but may find ourselves strong enough to stand erect amidst the play upon us of all evil influences, and to hold our own against every foe; the rock felt to be steady beneath our feet, the favour of God compassing us as a shield, and the shelter of His wings above; life spent day after day in ever closer, quieter, more dutiful fellowship with Him, and from that fellowship power streaming into every faculty, until the entire manner of living becomes an irresistible testimony to the grace of God, a restraint upon evil, a theme of praise to "all the earth,"—that is the hope concerning ourselves which the Bible warrants our cherishing.[1]

¶ Our lives ought to be like the mirror of a reflecting tele-

[1] R. W. Moss, *The Discipline of the Soul*, p. 158.

scope. The astronomer does not look directly up into the sky when he wants to watch the heavenly bodies, but down into the mirror, on which their reflection is cast. And so our little low lives down here upon the earth should so give back the starry bodies and infinitudes above us, that some dim eyes, which peradventure could not gaze into the violet abysses with their lustrous points, may behold them reflected in the beauty of our life.

¶ I remember hearing an old friend, long ago, speaking (in no uncharitable strain) of a neighbour, say, "I am sure he is a Christian, but he is a rather disagreeable one." He meant, I gathered, that this person took no pains at all to "adorn the doctrine." He worshipped God in Christ; he recognised his own sinfulness and need; he trusted his Saviour for pardon, and strove in His name to lead a pure and honest life. But it never occurred to him—at least it did not seem to do so—that part of his duty to his Lord was to learn at His feet the kindliness, the gentleness, the sympathy, the considerateness, which win and are attractive for Him. Let us see to it that we are not classed, by fair criticism, among the "disagreeable Christians." [1]

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *Thoughts for the Sundays of the Year*, p. 29.

The Angel of His Presence.

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The Angel of His Presence.

In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them.—lxiii. 9.

These words occur in the course of a most affecting and pathetic prayer which the prophet utters. In the course of his prayer he recalls the wonderful love of Jehovah for His people during their early afflictions, His patience with their waywardness, and His surpassing gentleness and care while on their way to Palestine. He is the same mighty Helper as of old, and His mercy is not restrained.

It is an argument from God's own past, an argument which never fails to sustain His suffering saints, and it is no less cheering to us than to the captive Jews; nay, more so, all the records of His dealings with His ancient people are still witnesses to us, and from them we can gather with what manner of Saviour we have to do. We have had the clearer light of the Cross to illuminate the Christian story. We can make the use of the New Testament doubly precious when we can trace the connection between the God of the Old and New Testament. The mediatorial office of Christ did not begin in the manger. It travels back to the door of history, before the birth of human souls. It is one Person all along the line, one character of patient loving-kindness and mercy that is revealed to us in both Testaments —more obscurely in the prophecies of the Old, more abundantly in the fulfilment of the New.

I.

HIS SYMPATHY.

"In all their affliction he was afflicted." Wonderful are those words. The more carefully they are studied, the more

surprising do they appear. It is only gradually that their meaning grows upon the mind, either filling it with increasing wonder or, where faith is strong enough to receive it, awakening overpowering feelings of gratitude and adoration. It must be understood at the outset that God's suffering is sympathetic. He shares in our afflictions, inasmuch as He has sympathy with us therein. We are so dear to Him as His children that He feels both with and for us.

1. *An afflicted God.*—There is no ground for the objection that suffering is impossible to God, because of the perfection of His nature. To be unsympathetic is no proof of perfection in any being. The most perfect father is by no means he who is most heedless of the feelings, and unaffected by the sufferings, of his children; nor the most perfect king he who is indifferent to, and unmoved by, the state of his subjects. And certainly it is a most arbitrary and groundless view of the perfection of the Divine Being, which pronounces it impossible for Him to be painfully affected by the sufferings of His own. So far as we know anything of moral perfection, we see that it is sympathetic just in proportion as it rises in degree. Love is the glory of God, as it is the goodness of man, and love is essentially sympathetic.

May it not be that this suffering is essential to the very highest blessedness? Is it not manifestly far more consistent with it, to say the least, than indifference or insensibility? With Bushnell, we cannot help thinking that such suffering must be joy itself, the fullest, and profoundest, and sublimest joy conceivable. There was never a being on earth so deep in His peace and so essentially blessed as Jesus Christ. Even His agony itself is scarcely an exception. There is no joy so grand as that which has a form of tragedy. We are never so happy, so essentially blessed, as when we suffer well, wearing out our life in sympathies spent on the evil and undeserving, burdened heavily in our prayers, struggling on through secret Gethsemanes, and groaning before God, in groans audible to God alone, for those who have no mercy on themselves. What man of the race ever finds that in such love as this he has been made unhappy? Therefore, when we say that God suffers in sympathy with His people, we do not deny that He is the ever-blessed God; we do rather by implication affirm His infinite blessedness.

2. *Afflicted in all our afflictions.*—"In *all* their affliction he was afflicted." Consider how many there are who suffer—and how varied their sufferings are. Think of the long procession of Zion's pilgrims who have watered their course with tears, and left on the flinty rock or the burning sand the marks of their bleeding feet. Think of the sighing and groaning of the prisoners, the victims of human oppression, which have reached the Divine ear. Think of the noble army of martyrs, who after suffering inhuman tortures have sealed their testimony with their blood. Think of the sufferers in less public spheres who have had wearisome nights and troublesome days appointed to them. Think of the Christian homes which have been darkened by poverty and suffering and bereavement, and of the myriads of Christian hearts on which from time to time dark shadows have fallen. Think of the many afflictions of the righteous, and of God as sharing in them all. And then say what individual sufferer can know anything of the extent of His, who has shared in the aggregated sufferings of His people throughout all generations, taking upon Himself the individual sorrows of every one, so that, "In all their affliction he was afflicted."

3. *The fulfilment in Christ.*—Here we have one of the tenderest conceptions of God that the Old Testament can give us: the conception of God suffering for and with His people. It would not be correct to say that this was a prediction of Christ; but it would be true to say that, here as elsewhere, Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil; that, in His person, He did fulfil the highest and deepest conceptions of God as, shall we say, capable of feeling with men, of descending, as it were, to their level, of bearing their burdens, of fighting their battles—and in this sense is not this picture an anticipation, an unconscious anticipation, of the Incarnation and the Passion of God as exhibited in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord?

When Jesus came and lived among us the heart of God was laid bare, and every one can see in the Gospel that patient wistful love which inhabits the secret place of the universe. As the father sits upon the housetop, and watches the crest of the hill, that he may catch the first glimpse of the returning

prodigal; as the householder makes ready his feast and sends for his ungrateful guests; as the vine master appeals to his disloyal tenants by his own son, we learn the expectation of God. As Jesus takes into His arms little children whom superior people have despised, and casts His charity over penitent women whom Pharisees cannot forgive, and mourns at the tomb of Lazarus over a friend whom He cannot afford to lose, one learns the graciousness of God. As Jesus turns sadly from Nazareth, the city of his youth, which had refused Him, and reproaches Capernaum, the city of His choice, which did not believe in Him, and weeps openly over Jerusalem, which knew not the day of her visitation, one learns the regret of God. And as Jesus appeals to the disciples, "Will ye also go away?" and prophesies with a sad heart that every one of His friends will forsake Him, and is cast into a deep gloom by the betrayal of Judas, we learn what is almost incredible, but most comfortable, the dependence of God. The Cross is not only in the heart of human life, it is also in the heart of God. He is the chief of all sufferers, because He is the chief of all lovers.

There are two great afflictions in which our Saviour may be said to have been afflicted.

(1) There is, in the first place, the affliction of *sin*. It is a wonderful and overwhelming truth that God in the person of Christ chose to learn by a personal experience the power of evil. This, surely, is the meaning of the temptation, and, perhaps, of the agony and the bloody sweat. It was not that Christ for one moment yielded in deed or thought to the Power of Darkness, to the temptations of evil, but, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "He suffered being tempted." It was not a mere dramatic representation, the contest of Christ with Satan. It was real. The victory was real, but it was a victory gained not without pain and effort. Nor was it only by the forces of evil combined against His own life that Christ was afflicted in our affliction. He saw all around Him the evidence of the sin of man. When He beheld the city He wept over it. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" "He was afflicted in their

affliction!" And so ever more and more He, the sinless One, bears the sins of men upon His own heart, feels them even as if they were His own, until at last they seem even to obscure the Father's face. . . . What else is the meaning of the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" . . . What does it mean except that, in that darkest hour, the Son of God had so completely identified Himself with His sinful brethren that "in all their affliction he was afflicted"?

It is this that gives Him His power to-day; the fact that He stooped to learn by a personal experience all the strength of evil, that He descended to enter into the common human struggle, and in issuing victorious to be the leader against the forces of evil everywhere. "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

(2) The other great affliction is the affliction of *suffering*. Sin and suffering—of one kind and another—do not these two words comprehend and cover the whole range of human ills? Do we not feel the suffering of the world to be one of our great difficulties in the way of believing in the goodness of God—the undeserved suffering of the world? Are we not impatient at the pious commonplaces that are hurled at us, that "all is for the best," that "God knows what is good for us"? "It is all very well," we can imagine men saying—"it is all very well to say that God knows what is best for us, but what does God know of suffering? Is He not high above the suffering of the universe, incapable of feeling it? what can His perfection know of all this anguish? That is a natural thought. The mystery of pain is one which baffles us, but at least the great and awful truth of Passiontide saves us from supposing that God is above or beyond the sphere of our suffering. "In all their affliction He was afflicted."

¶ Bright February days have a stronger charm of hope about them than any other days in the year. One likes to pause in the mild rays of the sun, and look over the gates at the patient plough-horses turning at the end of the furrow, and think that the

beautiful year is all before one. The birds seem to feel just the same; their notes are as clear as the clear air. There are no leaves on the trees and hedgerows, but how green all the grassy fields are! and the dark purplish brown of the ploughed earth and of the bare branches is beautiful too. What a glad world this looks like as one drives or rides along the valleys or over the hills! I have often thought so when, in foreign countries, where the fields and woods have looked to me like our English Loamshire—the rich land tilled with just as much care, the woods rolling down the gentle slopes to the green meadows—I have come on something by the roadside which has reminded me that I am not in Loamshire: an image of a great agony—the agony of the Cross. It has stood perhaps by the clustering apple blossoms, or in the broad sunshine by the cornfield, or at a turning by the wood where a clear brook was gurgling below; and surely, if there came a traveller to this world who knew nothing of the story of man's life upon it, this image of agony would seem to him strangely out of place in the midst of this joyous nature. He would not know that hidden behind the apple-blossoms, or among the golden corn, or under the shrouding boughs of the woods, there might be a human heart beating heavily with anguish; perhaps a young blooming girl, not knowing where to turn for refuge from swift-advancing shame. . . . Such things are sometimes hidden among the sunny fields, and behind the blossoming orchards, and the sound of the gurgling brook, if you came close to one spot behind a small bush, would be mingled for your ear with a despairing human sob. No wonder man's religion has much sorrow in it; no wonder he needs a suffering God.[1]

¶ Believing in Jesus, we can travel on, through one wild parish after another, upon English soil, and see, as I have done, the labourer who tills the land worse housed than the horse he drives, worse clothed than the sheep he shears, worse nourished than the hog he feeds—and yet not despair; for the Prince of sufferers is the labourer's Saviour; He has tasted hunger, and thirst, and weariness, poverty, oppression, and neglect; the very tramp who wanders houseless on the moorside is His brother; in his sufferings the Saviour of the world has shared, when the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, while the Son of God had not where to lay His head.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Maker is not by:
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Maker is not near.

[1] George Eliot, *Adam Bede*.

Oh, He gives to us His joy,
That our grief He may destroy:
Till our grief is fled and gone
He doth sit by us and moan.[1]

Outside holy Scripture there has not been a more intimate apprehension of the fellow-suffering of God than these words of Blake—

He doth sit by us and moan.

He might have built a palace at a word,
Who sometime had not where to lay His head.
Time was, and He who nourished crowds with bread,
Would not one meal unto Himself afford;
Twelve legions girded with angelic sword
Were at His beck—the scorned, the buffeted.
He healed another's scratch, His own side bled,
Side, feet, and hands with cruel piercings gored!
Oh! wonderful the wonders left undone!
And scarce less wonderful than those He wrought!
Oh! self-restraint, passing all human thought
To have all power and He as having none!
Oh! self-denying love, which felt alone
For needs of others—never for its own.[2]

II.

HIS PERSONAL PRESENCE.

"And the angel of his presence saved them." This must be understood, not as an angel of the Presence, who went out from the Presence to save the people, but, as it is in other Scriptures, God's own Presence, God Himself; and so interpreted, the phrase falls into line with the rest of the verse, which is one of the most vivid expressions that the Bible contains of the personality of God.[3]

The Semites had a horror of painting the Deity in any form. But when God had to be imagined or described, they chose the form of a man and attributed to Him human features. Chiefly they thought of His face. To see His face, to come into the

[1] W. Blake, *On Another's Sorrow.*
[2] R. C. Trench.
[3] G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, ii. p. 450.

light of His countenance, was the way their hearts expressed longing for the living God. (Ex. xxxiii. 14; Ps. xxxi. 16, xxxiv. 16, lxxx. 7). But among the heathen Semites, God's face was separated from God Himself, and worshipped as a separate god. In *heathen* Semitic religions there are a number of deities who are the faces of others. But the Hebrew writers, with every temptation to do the same, maintained their monotheism, and went no further than to speak of the *angel of God's face*. And in all the beautiful narratives of Genesis, Exodus, and Judges, about the glorious Presence that led Israel against their enemies, the angel of God's face is the equivalent of God Himself. Jacob said, the "God which hath fed me, and the angel which hath redeemed me, bless the lads." In Judges this angel's word is God's Word.

1. *The angel of His Presence.*—This singularly beautiful expression carries with it associations which must be dear to every heart. "The angel of his presence"—how the mind loves to linger on the music of those words, and how near they seem to bring us to high and holy things, things unspeakably precious and helpful to our souls! No one can stand in much doubt as to what they mean, strange and unaccustomed though the phrase may be. The "angel of the Lord" is an expression often used in the Old Testament to denote a special manifestation of God Himself; it does not denote a messenger coming from God; it frequently signifies a coming of God into human affairs. The still stronger phrase, "the angel of his presence" certainly denotes any form under which God chooses to make His immediate presence felt by His children. The form chosen may, or may not, be that of an angelic being or a human instrument, but it is always a means whereby God Himself comes right into human experience to help and heal and save.

Scarcely has God made a new covenant than Jehovah, in the guise of a man, is found in Abraham's tent, and the Judge of all the earth was there. From that day we grow familiar, as we read, with a form which seems, as it were, to haunt the world, and a form like unto the Son of Man—a form which comes and goes in fitful glimpses, speaks in Jehovah's name, expects the worship due to the Most High, and yet calls Himself the angel of the presence of God. Especially during the

Exodus this mysterious messenger appears to keep close company with His chosen flock as they march onward to their rest under His guidance. It was the "messenger of God" who went before Israel in the Red Sea, and spoke to Moses face to face. This was the visible Presence which commanded Moses to bring up the people, and to whom Moses said, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us?" And of whom we read, "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him." In these wonderful words, which might have been obscure at the time, but the meaning of which it is not now difficult to see, it is not hard to discover Jesus Christ, who was faithful, like Moses, though not like a servant of Moses, but as the Son of God. In His life and body He redeemed His people, and He guided them and helped them in the days of old. Well might St. Paul see in the Church in the wilderness a parallel of the Church of the New Testament. Well might he see in the manna and the water of refreshment a symbol of the Messiah. That rock from whence the water sprung was Christ, the same great patient Saviour.

¶ Our theories about God are our theology. It is well to value them, to be careful of them, to try our best to keep them pure and high. But the deeper question is, "What is our religion? What are our real thoughts of God? In that deep and secret place of our inmost consciousness, where all our desires and feelings and hopes and aspirations are born, what is God to us?" This is the great question, the searching question. And on the answer to it our peace, our happiness, our usefulness depend.

We say that God is perfect in wisdom. But do we feel that He is wise for us? Do we trust His wisdom to guide and direct us? Do we think of Him as the One who always knows what is best for us?

We say that God is perfect in righteousness. But do we know Him as "the Lord, our righteousness"? Do we trust assuredly in Him to cleanse us from guilt and deliver us from the power of sin? Do we yield ourselves to His will and purpose to purify and perfect us by the discipline of life?

We say that God is omnipresent:—

> His dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

It is a grand doctrine, an inspiring doctrine, this of the Divine omnipresence. But do we think of God as present with us personally in all the experiences of life? Such a thought of Him is infinitely more needful, infinitely more precious than any theory of His omnipresence.[1]

But the angel of His Presence cannot mean anything to us unless we realise what kind of a presence it is of which the prophet speaks. And surely this ought not to be hard to discover and understand. He looks backward over the tribulations and distresses of Israel, this man of God, himself a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and as he surveys the long story of troubles and suffering he sees God's presence shining through it all, like the face of a friend.

(1) *A friendly presence.*—It means, first of all, a gracious, friendly, loving, sympathising presence. God is with us in our troubles, not merely because He has to be there, since He is everywhere. He is there because He wants to be. Just as truly as you desire to be near your friends, your children, when they suffer, just so truly does God desire and choose to be near us in our afflictions. He would not be away from us even if He could. He is not present as a mere spectator, looking at us curiously while we suffer. That cold and distant conception of Him as the great onlooker,—

> Who sees with equal eyes as God of all
> A hero perish or a sparrow fall,

is not the thought of the Bible. He is with us as one who has the deepest interest in it all, feels all that happens to us, cares infinitely for us through it all. Nor is He present merely as the author of our pains and sorrows, who could have spared us from them if He would, but who insists upon inflicting them on us,

[1] H. van Dyke, *The Open Door*, p. 127.

whatever it may cost us to bear them. It costs Him as much as it costs us. "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." There is a wondrous power in the precise words in which the prophet voices this profound truth. They may be translated, "In all their adversity He was no adversary."

Our Lord Jesus Christ has become to the world in which we live the angel of the Presence, the Presence that saves. In Him God has laid bare His own heart and shown us the Divine that indwells. Never again can we think of God except in terms of Jesus. This is really the most tremendous thing that has ever happened in the long, slow, toilsome, painful unfolding of the spiritual consciousness of the human race. Time was when men could think of God as strong but not as kind, but they cannot do that now. It is a God of love or none.

(2) A *promised presence.*—God's presence is promised and promised for ever, for all time and in every experience. The text teaches us this. The angel of His face is none other than the angel of the covenant in whom God's pledge to be with His people for ever is redeemed. Turn back to the ancient Scriptures and hear Him give this pledge to Jacob: "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, . . . for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Hear His promise to Joshua: "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Hear His promise through Isaiah: "I the Lord will hear thee; I the God of Israel will not forsake thee. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. And even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." And then hear the pledge of Jesus Christ: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

2. The angel of His Presence *saved them.* The power of such a thought of God always with us, and most of all in our times of weakness and trial and trouble, must be a redeeming delivering, upbearing power.

¶ Some time ago a friend took me to his country house, where,

amidst other interesting things, he showed me the method by which his household and other households near it were supplied with water. He had located an inexhaustible supply, pure and good, at a great depth underground. How far it extended he did not know, but beyond his property, at any rate. He had sunk a shaft, and had placed above it an iron reservoir which would open for inspection at any time, a conspicuous object on his particular piece of property. It stood on a raised platform so that any one could easily see it and gaze upon its contents. From that reservoir pipes were led under the turf to all the rooms where water was fitted, though there were fields between, and there it gushed forth freely at any level the moment the taps were turned on. It is not an inappropriate symbol to me of our relationship to our blessed Lord and Master. The life of God is like that water supply underlying all our being, nourishing and sustaining it as the underground springs nourishing my friend's fields and gardens, without which they would be neither fields nor gardens, but only deserts. Without God there would be no humanity to go wrong; without God not for one moment could you draw your breath in the thinking of a thought, good or ill. There it was all the time, only hidden underground. Jesus Christ has drawn it from the depths and made it immediate. He is like the visible reservoir from which the pipes are laid that convey the Water of Life to every heart.[1]

¶ A little boy of mine came home one day bearing the marks of battle. Of course it was very wrong, but let me tell you fathers and mothers, the boy who does not sometimes get into a scrimmage and come out on the right side is not likely to do much in this world! My boy came home, and, of course, I rebuked him —only officially. I found he had been in conflict with a boy much bigger than himself. I said, "Were you frightened, Arthur?" He said, "No." I said, "You ought to have been. The boy was bigger than you." "I wasn't, dad," he replied. "You see, Norman (his big brother) was only just round the corner!" It is a grand thing to have a brother in reserve! Oh, my brothers, reverently I can tell the poorest, vilest, weakest man in London that if only he will set his face toward the light, though all the powers of hell give him battle, he has a big omnipotent redeeming Brother, not round the corner, but in the heart![2]

(1) His Presence must save us, first of all, from the sense of meanness, littleness, unworthiness which embitters life and makes sorrow doubly hard to bear. The Presence of God must

[1] R. J. Campbell. [2] A. T. Guttery.

bring a sense of dignity, of elevation into our existence. It was a great king who once said, "Where I sleep, there is the palace." The life that has the Presence of God in it can be neither trivial nor unworthy.

(2) The angel of God's face saves also from that feeling of reckless indifference, dumb carelessness, which sometimes tempts us to let our lives go blundering and stumbling along on the lower levels. It brings a new conscience into our thoughts, desires, and efforts, awakens a noble dissatisfaction with our half-hearted work, quickens within us a longing to be more fit for the Divine companionship.

It is one mark of a good friend that he makes you wish to be at your best while you are with him. The blessed persons who have this influence are made in the likeness of that heavenly Friend whose Presence is at once a stimulus and a help to purity of heart and nobleness of demeanour. A man's reputation is what his fellow-men think of him. A man's character is what God knows of him. When we feel that the angel of His face is with us, a careless life, a superficial life no longer satisfies us. We long to be pure in heart, strong in purpose, clean in deed, because we know that nothing else will satisfy Him.

(3) The angel of God's face saves us from the sense of weakness, ignorance, incompetence, which overwhelms us in the afflictions of life. We feel not only that we are powerless to protect ourselves against trouble, but that we are not able to get the good out of it that ought to come to us. We cannot interpret our sorrows aright. We cannot see the real meaning of them. We cannot reach our hand through the years to catch "the far-off interest of tears." We say to ourselves in despair, "God only knows what it means." And if we do not believe that God is with us, then that thought shuts us up in the darkness, puts the interpretation of the mystery far away from us, locks us up in the prison house of sorrow and leaves the key in heaven. But if we believe that God is with us, then the word of despair becomes a word of hope.

(4) The angel of God's face saves us from the sense of loneliness, which is unbearable. Companionship is essential to happiness. A solitary Eden would have been no Paradise. The deepest of all miseries is the sense of absolute isolation.

There are moments in the experience of most of us when the mysterious consciousness of the law which made all human souls separate, like islands—

> And bade betwixt their shores to be
> The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea,

fills us with heaviness of heart. In this painful solitude the present friendship of God is the only sure consolation. Nothing can divide us from Him—not misunderstanding, nor coldness, nor selfishness, nor scorn—for none of these things are possible to Him. Nothing can divide us from Him except our own sin, and that He has forgiven and taken away and blotted out by His great mercy in Christ.

¶ A few years ago a man of great talent, famous for his eloquence, but even better known for the entire unbelief in God which he proclaimed, was called to deliver a funeral address over the grave of his brother. In words of sombre pathos he compared this life to a narrow, green valley between the cold peaks of two eternities. We walk here for a little while in company with those whom we love. Then our hands are loosed and our companions vanish. We can see but a little way. Beyond the encircling hills all is gloom and nothingness. How different is the voice of one whose heart has known and trusted the angel of the face of God! "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."[1]

Strange that men should be saved by a Presence; it is such a quiet thing. Salvation might be thought to require something strong, potent, compelling; we are surprised at an influence so gentle. Yet, I think, the most potent thing in the world is just a Presence. What is it that determines the rank in society? It is the answer to the question, "Who are *there*?" What is it that brings condolence to an hour of bereavement? It is just the saying of one to another, "I am with you." It is not what is spoken; it is not what is done; it is the sense that some one is there. So is it with my Father. I am not anxious to know the *why*, but only the *where*, of God. It matters little to me for what purpose He walks upon the storm, nor is it of deadly consequence whether or not He shall say, "Peace, be still." The

[1] H. van Dyke, *The Open Door*, p. 143.

all-important thing is that the feet upon the sea should be His feet—His, and not another's. Tell me that, and I ask no more. There is all the difference in the world between a silent room and an empty room. There is a companionship where there is no voice. Is it not written, "In thy *presence* is fulness of joy"? In the very sense that my Father is there, though He speak not, though He whisper not, though He write not His message in a book, there comes to my heart a great calm.[1]

¶ In his book called *The Kingdom of Heaven*, which is a detailed statement of the writer's own personal faith, Peter Rosegger tells us of a Styrian farmer who was known to his neighbours by the nickname of "The Pair." He was always engaged in converse with some unseen friend. If he came to a part of the road where there was a rough path and a smooth, he took the rough path and left the other for his unseen companion. When he came to an inn he always ordered two glasses of wine, one for himself and one for his friend who was with him, and the friend's glass of wine had always to be served on the best utensil the inn could provide. And when paying his bill he would give directions that the friend's glass of wine, left behind, should be given to the first poor man who came that way. In his own home, at every meal, he always reserved the seat of honour at his right hand for this unseen friend, and before this vacant chair there was placed the best that his home could provide. And so he lived a most peaceful and cheerful life. At last he came to lie down on what proved to be the bed of his last sickness; and while lying there he had a vacant chair placed by him, and kept his right hand out, holding the hand of his unseen friend, and maintained with him low-toned converse. Men asked him who was there, and he said, "Don't you know? He is there;" and they came to understand that he believed, that he knew, that Jesus Christ was there. And so he died; and on the day of his funeral, Rosegger tells us, in his own beautiful and touching way, the grave was opened near a large marble figure of the Good Shepherd. It was a lovely day; the sun was shining brightly upon the marble figure, and a white shaft of light shot from the marble figure into the heart of the grave, and this Styrian farmer, who had lived this life of faith in the unseen, but very real, Son of God, was laid in that grave with the white light of heaven illuminating his darkness, a fitting termination to a life so pure and trustful.[2]

[1] G. Matheson, *Searchings in the Silence*, p. 132.

[2] G. Hanson in *The Free Church Year Book* for 1908, p. 137.

WITHDRAWN

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